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The body as text

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THE BODY AS TEXT

by

RITA LINTZ

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in Comparative Literature in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When the self is constituting the self in the act of writing, it would follow that self and text would be realized at the same time. This is one tautology offered by Dante's Divine Comedy¹, Melville's Moby-Dick or, the Whale², and Twain's The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.³ When, in addition, a first-person narrator is constituting the self as a textual character in the act of making the literary text it would follow that the first-person narrator and the literary text are constituted at the same time--this is the second tautology. Thus, we are offered two tautologies--one dealing with what is happening in the representation of reality, and one with the making of representation. Does it follow, however, that the self that is constituted in the act of writing realized in the represented reality is the self of the first-person narrator, also realized in the act of writing? By

interjecting an authorial presence, Mark Twain in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn plays with the image of a potential representation.

A religious ritual performed by Orthodox Jewish men offers a model, image, and source of understanding for reading these three works. The individual who performs the ritual is interpreting the following repeated Pentateuchal commandment: "And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes" (Deuteronomy 6:8:).⁴ By performing the ritual the practitioner reaffirms his identity in God, accepts Mosaic Law as it was handed to Moses on Mount Sinai, and recalls the freedom of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage.

The performance of the ritual is called laying phylacteries, or wearing Tefillin. Were we to observe the ritual, we would see a man literally binding himself in the text of God. Each of the two boxes of the phylacteries, one on the arm, one on the forehead, contains sections of the Pentateuch, which are interpreted as commanding the wearing of the phylacteries. Straps, which fasten the box to the

forehead, are twisted to form the letter daleth (ד); straps fastening the box to the arm are twisted to form the letter yad (י). These letters, with the letter shin (ש), embossed on the box of the forehead, form the word shaddai (ש ד ש), or "Almighty." Thus, we would see that the straps the Orthodox Jew uses for binding on his body are like pen shaping text on paper. We would also hear the man acknowledge the same commandment that commands him to entwine himself in text.⁵

I have turned to this ritual as a point of comparison for reading The Divine Comedy, Moby-Dick or, the Whale, and The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn because the act of writing for Dante, Ishmael, and Huck is a fulfillment of a commandment and because each must submit his will to an authority. With the Orthodox Jew, who is laying phylacteries (which is writing, by analogy), and whose certainty of the self in the world order is realized by this gesture, the act of writing for Dante, Ishmael, and Huck brings certainty to each that he is part of the world order; and this insures freedom.

In The Divine Comedy Dante is commanded to write, through Beatrice, Cacciaguida, and St. Peter, by God; in Moby-Dick or, the Whale, Ishmael is commanded to write by the Three Fates and the Old Testament God. And Huck is commanded by God to write the letter of conscience concerning the runaway slave, Jim. Although each of the three works deals with the religious model, or the image of the self constituting the self in the act of writing, it is The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn that addresses the problem of a first-person narrator with respect to the self that is narrated about. Twain shows that a first-person narrator exists without a referent; whereas a character written about by the first-person narrator on the contrary does have a referent in the represented real world. Twain does this by introducing the image of a character, Huck, who must write if he is to exist. Twain makes the represented real Huck Finn receive a commandment from God to write the letter of conscience; and he makes Huck Finn, as a literary character, receive a commandment to write The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn from the author, Mark Twain. This means

that Twain makes a character, Huck, bring himself into existence by writing. If a character's ontology is only character (however he resembles a real person), he is self-referential (or without a referent). And when the character brings himself into existence, which is what a first-person narrator does, whether it is Dante or Ishmael, and all other first-person narrators, the first-person narrator only exists at the time he is narrating. The relation of a first-person narrator with respect to the image of himself as represented real person is disjuncture. He is, as "I" with respect to "me," as disjoined as "I" is with respect to you, her, him, it, us, and them.

What is interesting in terms of analyzing the three literary works, because one text serves two ends, is to observe a paradox. Yes, disjuncture takes place between "I" and "me," or between first-person narrator and the represented real person, but because one text serves two ends, "I" and "me" are merged. This is because the same text is used in the realization of the religious model and the literary model. We find, for example, in The Divine

Comedy that the seven "Ps," which are literally inscribed by an angel on Dante's forehead, are, as initials of the word peccatum, or sin, a synecdoche seven times over for each of the seven capital sins, or peccata, of Purgatory. These same "Ps" are literalized by Dante/pilgrim as he performs acts of purgation, and thus is realizing his unity with God.

Like Dante, Ishmael in Moby-Dick or, the Whale pictures his body as an analogue of the same text he makes. By example, he transcribes text from his body to the page, and refers to himself, the text on his body, and the chapter which contains that same text as "we." Ishmael, thus, is unifying himself with the created universe in the act of writing; and the writing, which amounts to making the literary text, pictures indeed the same act of writing. Moreover, as Ishmael, at the end of the novel, quotes the injunction to write the text ("And I only am escaped alone to tell thee. Job"), Ishmael is saying he will write a text. In effect, Ishmael has already written the text.

With Dante and Melville, Twain shows that unity of the self with the world is realized by way of making text.

Twain, however, shows this by inversion. He has Huck reject language--Huck tears up the letter of conscience. In an action that is parallel to this, Twain also has Huck refuse to write another book. Unlike Dante and Ishmael, Huck does not want to conform his will with God; and he does not want to conform his will with his author. The result is an image of Huck at odds with the created universe and the same literary text he must write. Indeed, Huck's decision to not yield to God puts Huck at the end of the letter-writing episode where we find Dante at the beginning of his journey--that is at the entrance to Hell.

Making text for Dante, Ishmael, Huck, and with them the Orthodox Jew, who performs the ritual of laying phylacteries, serves to keep the soul on its journey to God, with God. This is experienced by accepting the Law. The text used by Dante, Ishmael and Huck that realizes this acceptance is not, however, the text of the Orthodox Jew, which is Scripture, or Truth. The text Dante, Ishmael, and Huck write is comprised of literary figures, such as metaphor, and these only resemble Truth. With Dante, we see

the problem of writing the sacred: how can a mortal man put into words the Truth that he experiences, and which transcends life? For example, Dante says:

Chi poria mai pur con parole sciolte
dicer del sangue e de le piaghe a pieno
ch'i' ora vidi, per narrar più volte?

Ogne lingua per certo verria meno
per lo nostro sermonie e per la mente
c'hanno a tanto comprender poco seno.

(Who could ever fully tell, even in unfettered words, through many times narrating, the blood and the wounds that I now saw? Surely every tongue would fail, because of our speech and our memory which have little capacity to comprehend so much.)

Inferno XXVII, vv. 1-6;

and:

S'io avessi le rime aspre e chiocce
come sì converrebbe al tristo buco
sovra 'l qual pontano tutte l'altre rocce,

io premerei di mio concetto il suco
più pienamente; ma perch'io non l'abbo,
non senza tema a dicer mi conduco;

ché non è impresa da pigliare a gabbo
discriver fondo a tutto l'universo,
né da lingua che chiami mamma o babbo.

(If I had harsh and grating rhymes, as would befit the dismal hole on which all the other rocks converge and weigh, I would press out more fully the juice of my conception; but since I do not have them, it is not without fear that I bring myself to speak; for to describe the bottom of the whole universe is not an enterprise to be taken up in sport, nor for a tongue that cries mamma and

daddy.)

Inferno XXXIII, vv. 1-9.

Such limitations of materials, however, do not ultimately limit Dante from succeeding in realizing his goal. On the contrary, Dante uses the same task of writing to re-experience God, or Truth. And the same act saves Dante.

Making text by way of applying literary figures also saves Ishmael. The analogy, moreover, between text and weave and the images through which the writing is realized convert scene for Ishmael into sacrament. Indeed, in Moby-Dick or, the Whale, God's foot is on the treadle of a loom. Moreover, the same Three Fates who put Ishmael on the journey and who rescue him from drowning, guide Ishmael in writing the "drama" that the Old Testament God orders him to write.

With Dante and Ishmael (and the Orthodox Jew), Huck is aware that his identity with God, thus the certainty of self in and with the world order, is made by way of making text. Writing the letter of conscience for Huck, however, realizes, instead of Truth, a lie. Truth, Huck experiences, is the inversion of his soul. Writing for Huck, in addition, as a first-person narrator is a trial. Thus, contrary to Dante and Ishmael, Huck does not

experience freedom in the act of writing. The tautology of the self constituting the self in the act of writing for Huck applies to Huck by inversion.

The approach I am taking to read The Divine Comedy, Moby-Dick or, the Whale, and The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is to follow the tautological aspect of each text. I will show, through the specificity of examples offered, how the movement of Dante, Ishmael, and Huck through a literal landscape is a quest for identity and truth; and I will show that the same movement and quest for identity is realized by the first-person narrator as he pictures himself moving in the literary landscape of his own making. We will observe, by way of the image of the body, the relations between "inside" and "outside," or representation and what is represented, and between part and whole. My aim is to show how the self is constituted in the act of writing as the religious commandment to write is fulfilled. With this we will observe how the text realized by the religious act of the self constituting the self in the act of writing is merged with the act of writing for the first-person narrator, who, also, constitutes the self in the act of writing. In the first case, the self is the self as soul and body, in the second the self is the self as text

and image.

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Notes

¹ Dante Alighieri, The Divine Comedy, 6 volumes. Italian text edited and translated by Charles S. Singleton, (Princeton: Princeton UP, Bollingen Series LXXX, 1970-1975).

² Herman Melville, Moby-Dick or, the Whale, Edited by Charles Feidelson, Jr. (New York: Bobbs Merrill, 1964).

³ Mark Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. Edited with an introduction by Peter Coveney (New York: Penguin, 1966).

⁴ Quotations from the Bible are from the King James version.

⁵ Abraham Z. Idelsohn, The Ceremonies of Judaism (Cincinnati: The National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods, 1930) 60-63;

Aryeh Kaplan, Tefillin (New York: National Conference of Synagogue Youth/NCSY Youth Division, Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, 1975);

William Rosenau, Jewish Ceremonial Institutions and Customs (New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1929) 43-62.

CHAPTER 2

THE DIVINE COMEDY

The Divine Comedy is located in the body of Dante.

Dante shows it is, and summarizes this in the final verse of the poem, as follows:

A l'alta fantasia qui mancò possa;
ma già volgeva il mio disio e 'l velle,
sì come rota ch'igualmente è mossa,

l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle.

(Here power failed the lofty phantasy; but already my desire and my will were revolved, like a wheel that is evenly moved, by Love which moves the sun and the other stars.)

Paradiso XXXIII, vv. 142-145.

Velle (v. 143) is the Latin term for "will." The journey of Dante, pilgrim, is the journey of a poet whose will conforms with God. The same word velle, or will, of the pilgrim is a pun on the word vello. This word, which means parchment, is applied by Dante as a metaphor both as the place of the text and the skin of Dante, as follows:

con altra voce omai, con altro vello

ritornerò poeta, ed in sul fonte
del mio battesimo prenderò 'l cappello;

(with changed voice now and with changed fleece a
poet will I return, and at the font of my baptism
will I take the crown;)

Paradiso XXV, vv. 7-9.

Referring to the skin as the sheepskin, or lambskin, Dante is also depicting himself as the now older lamb of Christ returned to the fold. With velle and vello, or with will and skin and parchment, a third term, which resembles in shape velle and vello, is added. This is vele, and it is applied by Dante to mean sails and text. Vele appears in the opening verses of Purgatorio, as follows:

Per correr miglior acque alza le vele
omai la navicella del mio ingegno,

(To course over better waters the little bark of
my genius now hoists her sails,)

Purgatorio I, vv. 1, 2.

When, therefore, Dante says at the end of the poem that his wings and his pens (a pun on the word penne) are realized by velle, he is unifying the experience of pilgrim and poet. He is also merging intangible will, or velle, with material vello, or skin and parchment, and these with the vele, or

text. In addition, vello, or sheepskin, as I will show, is the analogue of Dante's skin inscribed with the poem. Thus, the sum of will, skin, parchment, and text is the one Dante, and The Divine Comedy. For all these reasons, we could say The Divine Comedy is located in the body of Dante.

The Divine Comedy is a narrative of a poet's journey of the afterworld. It is during the journey that Dante is commanded to write the text by God, through Beatrice, Cacciaguida, and St. Peter. Thanks to the intervention of Beatrice, the symbol of revealed truth, with God, Dante is given the opportunity as a live man to journey through the afterworld before his death. He travels through Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, where he sees the justice of God in operation. In the Empyrean he is face to face with God. Unlike the dead souls in the afterworld, Dante alive will return to earth; and he will write what he has seen.

My aim in this analysis is to follow the course of Dante's journey and show the points of merger of the image of the self constituting the self in the act of writing, which is a religious fulfillment, with the image of the self

constituting the self in the act of writing, which is realized by the first-person narrator. To this end, I will show how Dante/pilgrim is realized as a saved soul. We will also observe that Dante's body experiences changes that realize him in such literary figures as metonymy, synecdoche, metaphor, and simile. We will observe, too, that Dante's body realizes the metaphor of maker of verse and the same text he is making. And we will see that the making of the journey teaches Dante not only the way of being a Christian but the way of being a poet.

The image of the self constituting the self in the act of writing takes shape as a realizable idea as the Purgatorio is being written. The place to begin this analysis, therefore, would be Dante's contrappasso. Dante's contrappasso, or the act of saving the soul through punishment, takes a turn in the form of making text, indeed The Divine Comedy. (In fact, Dante does not say what his sin is; he does, however, go through the motions of purgation (as Everyman) for all the seven sins of Purgatory. [A common consensus among commentators, it should be noted,

is that Dante's sin is pride--this because he goes through flames at the top of Purgatory]).

The contrappasso of Dante works like this: before Dante passes through the Gate of Purgatory an angel inscribes the letter "P" seven times on Dante's forehead (which is Dante's vello, or skin), as follows:

Sette P ne la fronte mi descrisse
col punton de la spada, e "Fa che lavi,
quando se' dentro, queste piaghe" disse.

(Seven P's he traced on my forehead with the point of his sword and said, "See that you wash away these wounds when you are within.")

Purgatorio IX, vv. 112-114.

Each "P" represents one of the peccata, or seven capital sins of Purgatory, which are: pride, envy, anger, sloth, avarice, gluttony, and lust. Once each sin is seen and experienced by Dante, an angel removes the "P" that is proper to the sin, or place of Purgatory. Although the actual word for each of the seven sins is not inscribed on Dante's forehead, we could, by tracking the number of "Ps" on Dante's forehead, determine the location of Dante in the scheme of Purgatory. Similarly, by tracking the number of "Ps" on Dante's forehead, and because the poem is an

analogue of the afterworld, we could (in theory) determine Dante's place in the poem. This is because the letter "P" is literally the same "P" whether it is of the spiritual world or of the living world: "P" is "P."

Each "P" is both a metonymy and synecdoche. As a metonymy, the "P" is that part of Purgatory to which the "P" applies, and ultimately the entire scheme of the afterworld, which is also to say the entire Divine Comedy. As a synecdoche, each "P" is a part of the word peccatum, or sin. We should also imagine that because Dante is writing the poem as the first-person narrator, the "Ps," carried literally on the body of the pilgrim, literalize Dante's own body as the message carrier. Thus, the body is a book.

A guide to reading Dante's poem and Dante's philosophy of art is offered by Dante/poet by way of Dante/pilgrim. As Dante/pilgrim is looking at souls in the moon, he makes a mistake and thinks, instead of seeing the real, that he is seeing the reflection of the real, as follows:

Quali per vetri trasparenti e tersi,
o ver per acque nitide e tranquille,

non si profonde che i fondi sien persi,

tornan d'i nostri visi le postille
debili sì, che perla in bianca fronte
non vien men tosto a le nostre pupille;

tali vid'io più facce a parlar pronte;
per ch'io dentro a l'error contrario corsi
a quel ch'accese amor tra l' omo e 'l fonte.

Sùbito sì com'io di lor m'accorsi,
quelle stimando specchiati sembianti,
per veder di cui fosser, li occhi torsi;

e nulla vidi, e ritorsili avanti

: : : : : : : : : : : : : : : :
: : : : : : : : : : : : : : : :

(As through smooth and transparent glass, or
through clear and tranquil waters, yet not so deep
that the bottom be lost, the outlines of our faces
return so faint that a pearl on a white brow comes
not less boldly to our eyes, so did I behold many
a countenance eager to speak; wherefore I fell
into the contrary error to that which kindled love
between man and the fountain.

No sooner was I aware of them than, taking them
for mirrored faces, I turned round my eyes to see
of whom they were, and saw nothing, and I turned
them forward again. . .)

Paradiso III, vv. 10-22.

To illustrate his mistake of seeing the real as a
reflection, Dante/pilgrim makes a gesture which he says is
the reverse of that "omo," or man (Narcissus), (v. 18,
Ibid.), as follows:

per ch'io dentro a l'error contrario corsi
a quel ch'accese amor tra l' omo e 'l fonte.

(wherefore I fell into the contrary error to that
which kindled love between man and the fountain.)

(Ibid. vv. 17, 18).

With himself as the learning pilgrim, Dante/poet shows, by using the metaphor of text, that only text, or imitation, is knowable to a reader. The word OMO may be written so that the reflection of the word is identical to what is reflected, or the "real" word. Thus, OMO, reflected and real, looks the same: OMO is OMO.

In the same passage, still applying metaphors of text by means of text, Dante shows that as a pilgrim he experiences the faces of the moon as text. He says, "tornan d'i nostri visi le postille" (the outlines of our faces return) (Paradiso III, v. 13). Charles Singleton, commenting on the word postille, or outlines, says postille are: "Literally, 'notes' such as might be found on a manuscript page surrounding the main text; here, metaphorically, 'outlines,' 'lineaments,' 'contours' of the face'" (Commentary¹, [65]). And John Ciardi², who translates the verse as "a footnote of our lineaments will show," comments: "The figure seems oddly out of context but its intent is clear: Dante is suggesting that the image is

related to the face as a footnote is related to the text"
(Note 13, p. 50).

Thus, the reading lesson demonstrates to the reader that as Dante/pilgrim realizes he is looking at reality, and not at a reflection, Dante/poet shows, by using textual metaphors, that inversely the reader on earth of The Divine Comedy can only read reflection. Reality, seen by Dante, is only knowable to the reader by way of the text.

With the reading lesson, Dante also provides a lesson on his theory of art (which he learns as a pilgrim in Purgatory). Looking on marble carvings, which depict the sins of Purgatory and their corresponding virtues, Dante/poet remarks upon the realistic quality of the sculpture, as follows:

Morti li morti e i vivi parean vivi:

(Dead the dead, and the living seemed alive.)

Purgatorio XII, v. 67.

In a place that would seem least likely to need art, and where only reality exists--the afterworld--there is art. Thus, just as Dante is learning the justice of God, he is learning the form of art that he should follow.

Art, Dante learns, should be life-like, or

realistic. Now, using the same text to show that text is what is knowable to the reader, and this again with the word man, a lesson is offered to the reader. This time the word for man is its variant form of OMO, which is VOM. Dante creates an anaphora, playing on the word VOM, as he describes the realistic marble carvings, as follows:

Vedea
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Vedea
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Vedea
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Vedea
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Mostrava.
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Mostrava.
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Mostrava.
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Mostrava.
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Vedea
O
Mostrava.

Purgatorio XII, vv. 25-63.

I have divided the analysis into sections which show how the body of Dante is realizing the merged role of Dante as poet and pilgrim. As a pilgrim who fulfills the commandment of God to write, Dante actualizes the religious model. As a poet, he actualizes the literary model. These two merge because the text is the same for each. Thus, we are offered an image of a realized double tautology.

A word about the image of the body in the afterworld. A soul in Hell and Purgatory is visualized as a transparent, outlined human body. Souls in Paradise are

like those in Hell and Purgatory, or they are depicted as sparkling lights. Dante, who is alive, is not transparent, but flesh and blood. His body experiences sluggishness at first, then increasing lightness as he ascends towards God. The changes are attributed to the pilgrim/Dante's condition from ignorance to enlightenment.

The image of Dante's flesh and body as Dante participates in the experience of unity of the self in God, realized by the contrappasso, distinguishes Dante from the other penitents. Truth revealed to Dante, passes through Dante's body by inscription, and it is emitted by him in the form of poetry. Only Dante's body is described as inscribed.

- - -

Dante demonstrates his ontology as poet:

Turning a text is literalized by Dante/poet as Dante/pilgrim literally turns his body. In the passage which pictures Dante facing the faces of the moon, Dante turns from the real, thinking the real to be a reflection. Turning around and seeing nothing, Dante returns his gaze to what he now knows is the real, as follows:

Sùbito sì com'io di lor m'accorsi,
 quelle stimando specchiati sembianti,
 per veder di cui fosser, li occhi torsi;

e nulla vidi, e ritorsi li avanti
 : : : : : : : : : : : : : : : :

(No sooner was I aware of them than, taking them
 for mirrored faces, I turned round my eyes to see
 of whom they were, and saw nothing, and I turned
 them forward again)

Purgatorio III, vv. 19-22.

Are Dante/pilgrim's eyes literally turning back into his own head to see the text as a flashback of reality? Is Dante applying a synecdoche? Dante's eyes would be the part of the body that applies to the whole body. In either case, the infinitives of the words "torsi" (v. 21) and "ritorsi" (v. 22), applied by Dante to explain his turn to expected

reality, which is "nulla" (v. 22), or nothing, and the turn again to reality, are torcere and ritorcere. The Latin root for torcere and ritorcere is torquere, which means to twist.

Turning in Latin also is vertere. From this we find verso, or verse, or the Latin versus. A poet who turns is a maker of text. Thus, as the pilgrim/Dante (who is also the poet) turns his eyes, the same poet/Dante is, by analogy, picturing his body in a metaphor of a poet making verses by means of his memory, which is a "reflection" of the real. Turning the body here, moreover, is a gesture similar to the turning that Dante makes at the end of the poem.

Revolving in perfect motion with the movement of the universe, Dante's poem and pilgrimage come to the same end, at once, as follows:

A l'alta fantasia qui mancò possa;
ma già volgeva il mio disio e 'l velle,
sì come rota ch'igualmente è mossa,

l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle.

(Here power failed the lofty phantasy; but already my desire and my will were revolved, like a wheel that is evenly moved, by Love which moves the sun and the other stars.)

Paradiso XXXIII, vv. 142-145.

Thus, Dante's body is "turning a text" as Dante is turning in equal time and motion with the universe.

- - -

Dante's contrition as a pilgrim is an analogue of the literary figure caesura:

The final experience of the pilgrim's journey takes place in the Empyrean in Paradise as Dante sees his true nature in God:

O luce eterna che sola in te sidi,
sola t'intendi, e da te intelletta
e intendente te ami e arridi!

Quella circolazione che sì concetta
pareva in te come lume riflesso,
da li occhi miei alquanto circunspetta,

dentro da sé, del suo colore stesso,
mi parve pinta de la nostra effige:
per che 'l mio viso in lei tutto era messo.

.

veder voleva come si convenne
l'imago al cerchio e come vi s'indova;

ma non eran da ciò le proprie penne:
se non che la mia mente fu percossa
da un fulgore in che sua voglia venne.

(O Light Eternal, who alone abidest in Thyself,
alone knowest Thyself, and, known to Thyself and

knowing, lovest and smilest on Thyself!

That circling which, thus, begotten, appeared in
Thee as reflected light, when my eyes had dwelt on
it for a time, seemed to me depicted with our
image within itself and in its own color,
wherefore my sight was entirely set upon it.

.

I wished to see how the image conformed to the
circle and how it has its place therein;

but my own wings were not sufficient for that,
save that my mind was smitten by a flash wherein
its wish came to it.)

Paradiso XXXIII, vv. 124-132.

The seeing of the self by Dante in Paradise is preceded by two gestures of self-reflection made in Purgatory, and both are related to Dante's contrition. The act of contrition unifies Dante to God. The word contrition etymologically depicts a break.³ As the spiritual break is experienced by Dante/pilgrim, the text realizes a literary figure that is an analogy of breaking. This is caesura.

C. H. Grandgent, including his own viewpoint with other commentators, notes:

"Most commentators see in the three stairs, the parts of the sacrament of penance--contrition, confession, satisfaction. But according to the literal sense of the poem the souls who have reached the gate should have accomplished these duties (for the most part at least) before death; otherwise they would not

have attained the mountain at all. And in Dante's symbolical journey through Purgatory (indicating the purification of his soul as a result of discipline on earth) he is not yet ready to receive this sacrament, which forms the culmination of his expiatory task. Contrition, confession, and satisfaction await him upon his arrival at the top of the mountain, where they are administered by Beatrice herself: Purg. XXX, 97-9; XXXI, 1-36, 88-90" (p. 399).⁴

I will show how the spiritual act of contrition, realized by the caesura, is realized in that break. While still outside Purgatory, Dante experiences his first self-reflection, and looks into a mirror-like step. Dante does not tell us here what he sees; he only says he sees, as follows:

Là ne venimmo; e lo scaglion primaio
bianco marmo era, sì pulito e terso
ch'io mi specchiai in esso qual io paio.

(We then came on, and the first step was white
marble so polished and clear that I mirrored
myself in it in my true likeness;)

Purgatorio IX, vv. 80-96.

In a second self-reflection, twenty-one cantos later, Dante does say he sees shame (where the "Ps" had been inscribed) on his forehead, as follows:

Li occhi mi cadder giù nel chiaro fonte;
ma veggendomi in esso, i trassi a l'erba,
tanta vergogna mi gravò la fronte.

(My eyes fell down to the clear fount, but, seeing
myself in it, I drew them back to the grass, so

great shame weighed on my brow;)

Purgatorio XXX, vv. 76-79.

Observe, again, the first self-reflection:

ch'io mi specchiai in esso qual io paio.

(that I mirrored myself in it in my true likeness;)

Purgatory IX, v. 82.

"Ch'io mi specchiai," "that I mirrored myself," is in the past tense. "Qual io paio" ("As I appear" [this is the literal translation, not Singleton's "in my true likeness"]) is in the present tense. I suggest since the present tense "Qual io paio" ("As I appear") is a description not of what Dante sees but indeed that he sees, that the gesture is anticipatory. Realization of the reflection takes place in the period beginning immediately following Dante's passage through the Gate, thus between the first self-reflection, or "as I appear," and the second, twenty-one cantos later.

If "Qual io paio," or "As I appear," anticipates what is ahead and that which will endure for twenty-one cantos, the experience of the second self-reflection would be retrospective. And indeed the past tense of the second

self-reflection suggests this, as does the fact that Dante sees shame in the form of the traces of the seven "Ps," as follows:

Li occhi mi cadder giù nel chiaro fonte;
ma veggendomi in esso, i trassi a l'erba,
tanta vergogna mi gravò la fronte.

(My eyes fell down to the clear fount, but, seeing myself in it, I drew them back to the grass, so great shame weighed on my brow;)

Purgatorio XXX, vv. 76-79.

Thus, it would be as if "Qual io paio," or "As I appear," were the mirror into which Dante literally enters. It is in this period that Dante undergoes his contrappasso, realized by the inscription of the seven "Ps" on Dante's body, and the making of the text. Contrition, as already noted, etymologically means break, is thus the analogue of the caesura, or the structural break of the text.

Contrition of the soul and caesura of the text, moreover, are previewed by Dante in the same Gate of Purgatory. The place of the afterworld, thus, is an analogue of the text and the soul. Before Dante looks at himself in the mirror-like step and says "Qual io paio" ("As I appear"), he and Virgil approach the Gate. Dante sees

what to him at first looks like a break in the wall, as follows:

Noi ci appressammo, ed eravamo in parte
che là dove pareami prima rotto
pur come un fesso che muro diparte,

vidi un porta

(We drew near and came to a point from which,
where at first there appeared to be merely a
break, like a fissure that divides a wall,

I saw a gate, ...)

Purgatorio IX, vv. 73-76).

Entrance into Purgatory through the Gate (or previously imagined break) is made possible by an angel who is holding St. Peter's two keys to the gate, and who is seated on a throne before the gate, as follows:

Da Pier le tegno; e disse mi ch' i' erri
anzi ad aprir ch' a tenerla serrata,
pur che la gente a' piedi mi s' atterri.

(From Peter I hold them, and he told me to err
rather in opening than in keeping shut, if but the
people prostrate themselves at my feet.)

Purgatorio IX, vv. 127-129.

In sequence, the following actions are experienced and described by Dante:

1. Dante must take three steps before he is on the

same step as the angel seated on the throne, as follows:

Per li tre gradi sù di buona voglia,
mi trasse il duca mio (Virgil) dicendo: "Chiedi
umilmente che 'l serrame scioglia."

(Up by the three steps, with my good will, my
leader drew me, saying, "Beg him humbly that he
withdraw the bolt.")

Purgatorio IX, v. 106-108;

2. Dante looks into the one highly polished step:

Là ne venimmo; e lo scaglione primo
bianco marmo era, sì pulito e terso
ch'io mi specchiai in esso qual io paio.

(We then came on, and the first step was white
marble so polished and clear that I mirrored
myself in it in my true likeness;)

Purgatorio IX, vv. 80-96;

3. an angel inscribes Dante's forehead, as follows:

Sette P ne la fronte mi descrisse
col punton de la spada, e "Fa che lavi,
quando se' dentro, queste piaghe" disse.

(Seven P's he traced on my forehead with the point
of his sword and said, "See that you wash away
these wounds when you are within.")

Purgatorio IX, vv. 112-114.

Now, Dante's forehead literally inscribed with the seven

"Ps," Dante passes through the Gate of Purgatory, or earlier

perceived break. Thus, Dante, passing through the Gate, is

entering into the literalized image of spiritual contrition

and the literary caesura, which is the opening and mirror. Now as a pilgrim, whose inscribed forehead is to his body what an inscribed lintel is to a gate, Dante moves himself as a gate through a gate. Dante has earlier passed through the inscribed gate of Hell.

The image of a gate speaking and written, realized by Dante as a kind of Gate of Purgatory, draws parallels to the speaking and written Gate of Hell. The inscription on the Gate of Hell is:

PER ME SI VA NE LA CITTÀ' DOLENTE
PER ME SI VA NE L'ETTERNO DOLORE,
PER ME SI VA TRA LA PERDUTA GENTE.

GIUSTIZIA MOSSE IL MIO ALTO FATTORE;
FECEMI LA DIVINA PODESTATE,
LA SOMMA SAPIENZA E 'L PRIMO AMORE.

DINANZI A ME NON FUOR COSE CREATE
SE NON ETTERNE, E IO ETTERNO DURO.
LASCIATE OGNE SPERANZA, VOI CH'INTRATE.

(THROUGH ME YOU ENTER THE WOEFUL CITY,
THROUGH ME YOU ENTER ETERNAL GRIEF,
THROUGH ME YOU ENTER AMONG THE LOST.

JUSTICE MOVED MY HIGH MAKER:
THE DIVINE POWER MADE ME,
THE SUPREME WISDOM, AND THE PRIMAL LOVE.

BEFORE ME NOTHING WAS CREATED
IF NOT ETERNAL, AND ETERNAL I ENDURE.
ABANDON EVERY HOPE, YOU WHO ENTER.

Inferno III, vv. 1-9.

Satan, thus, is the figure of Hell, and this is his gate;
 Dante is the figure of Purgatory, and this is his gate; and
 God is the figure of Paradise.

- - -

Dante's body lightens and the poem fattens:

Now, in Purgatory, having passed through the Gate
 of Purgatory, or formerly perceived break, entering into the
 experience of "Qual io paio," or "As I appear," which is the
 realized self-reflection, and the open caesura, Dante's body
 gradually experiences changes. The body's increasing
 lightness is explained by Virgil to Dante in terms of the
 text on Dante's forehead, as follows:

Già montavam su per li scaglioni santi,
 ed esser mi pareva troppo più lieve
 che per lo piano non mi pareva davanti.

Ond' io: "Maestro, di, qual cosa greve
 levata s'è da me, che nulla quasi
 per me fatica, andando, si riceve?"

Rispuose: "Quando i P che son rimasi
 ancor nel volto tuo presso che stinti,
 saranno, com' è l'un, del tutto rasi,

fier li tuoi piè dal buon voler sì vinti,
 che non pur non fatica sentiranno,
 ma fia diletto loro esser sù pinti."

(Now we were mounting by the holy stairs, and it seemed to me I was far lighter than before, on the level; wherefore I said, "Master, tell me, what weight has been lifted from me that I feel almost no weariness as I go on?" He answered, "When the P's that are still left on your brow all but effaced shall be, as one is, quite erased, your feet shall be so conquered by good will that not only will they not feel fatigue, but it will be a delight to them to be urged upwards.")

Purgatorio XII, vv. 115-126.

As each "p" is removed, which is to say as each sin is purged by Dante, Dante experiences lightness. Observe how Dante, later in Paradise, draws a parallel of the pilgrim's enlightened soul with the body of the poet, lightened in the course of writing the poem, as follows:

Se mai continga che 'l poema sacro
al quale ha posto man e cielo e terra,
sì che m'ha fatto per molti anni macro,

vinca la crudeltà che fuor mi serra
del bello ovile ov'io dormi' agnello,
nimico ai lupi che li danno guerra;

con altra voce omai, con altro vello
ritornerò poeta, ed in sul fonte
del mio battesimo prenderò 'l cappello;

(If ever it come to pass that the sacred poem to which heaven and earth have so set hand that it has made me lean for many years should overcome the cruelty which bars me from the fair sheepfold where I slept as a lamb, an enemy to the wolves which war on it, with changed voice now and with changed fleece a poet will I return, and at the font of my baptism will I take the crown;)

Paradiso XXV, vv. 1-9.

The historic Dante, born in Florence, is the young lamb-- "del bello ovile ov' io dormi' ("from the fair sheepfold where I slept as a lamb" v. 5). The body of Dante returned to Florence, where Dante as a poet will return to take the poet's hat--"Ritornerò poeta. . . prenderò 'l cappello" ("a poet I will return . . . will I take the crown" vv. 8, 9)-- is the gesture of a turning and returning Dante, or poetry making body. Verse seven, "Con altra voce omai, con altro vello" ("with changed voice now and with changed fleece" v. 7), depicts another, or renewed voice, and another, or renewed, skin. The formerly young skin of the lamb, "agnello," is now the older sheepskin, or "vello," of the poet. And it is the poet's skin that is inscribed as the parchment is written upon.

Thus, the loss of bodily weight of Dante, as pilgrim and poet, is pictured in proportion to the making of the journey and writing of the poem. Theoretically, Dante should not exist once the poem is realized; or Dante should be literally spiritualized in direct proportion to the

materialization of the text.

- - -

Dante is the poem:

The image of Dante's entrance and exit of Purgatory and the same canticle, Purgatorio, realizes a metaphor of a Dante who is pilgrim, poet, and text.

Purgatorio begins, as follows:

Per correr miglior acque alza le vele
 omai la navicella del mio ingegno,
 che lascia dietro a sé mar sì crudele;

e canterò di quel second regno
 dove l'umano spirito si purga
 e di salire al ciel diventa degno.

Ma qui la morta poesì resurga,
 O sante Muse, poi che vostro sono;
 e qui Caliope alquanto surga,

seguitando il mio canto con quel suono
 di cui le Piche misere sentiro
 lo colpo tal, che disperar perdono.

(To course over better waters the little bark of my genius now hoists her sails, leaving behind her a sea so cruel; and I will sing of that second realm where the human spirit is purged and becomes fit to ascend to Heaven. But here let dead poetry rise again, O holy Muses, since I am yours; and here let Calliope rise up somewhat, accompanying my song with that strain whose stroke the wretched Pies felt so that they despaired of pardon.)

Purgatory I, vv. 1-12.

The place of the journey is also the place of the poem. As a boat, as a pilgrim, as a poet, as sails, vele, thus text, Dante in the water and in the book says "e canterò," or "I will sing." But, even as Dante says, "I will sing," Dante is already singing. What is said to take place in the future, by means of the future tense, "I will sing," is realizing in advance the same expected song, now being sung, and by the first-person narrator--and this means as text from text, or from "inside" the text.

The entrance of Dante into Purgatory, as a boat (and the same Purgatorio), is recalled as an image by Dante as he exits from Purgatory. Immersed into the River Eunoe, Dante pictures himself now out of the water, as follows:

ma perché piene son tutte le carte
ordite a questa cantica seconda,
non mi lascia più ir lo fren de l'arte.

Io ritornai da la santissima onda
rifatto sì come piante novelle
rinovellate di novella fronda,

puro e disposto a salire a le stelle.

(but since all the pages ordained for this second canticle are filled, the curb of art lets me go no further. I came forth from the most holy waves, renovated even as new trees renewed with new foliage, pure and ready to rise to the stars.)

Purgatorio XXXIII, vv. 139-145.

Metaphors are mixed, and so, too, literary figures, and all with respect to Dante as the text. The boat, or navicella, that Dante was in the opening of the canticle, which would have been made of wood, is now "piante novelle." Thus, as Dante is closer to God and growing truer in his nature, the same wood that is the boat (or bark) of the opening of the canticle) is truer as flora in its nature (Singleton translates "piante novelle" as new trees). Now, at the end of the canticle, Dante also combines the image of a shuttle with the image of the boat as a shuttle that moves thread through a loom. A shuttle is the instrument that a weaver uses to pull the horizontal weft through the vertical warp, or ordite (v. 140). Dante, thus, pictures himself the same thread he himself as weaver is weaving into cloth.

Returning, again, to the opening of the canticle and the image of Dante's poetic skill:

Per correr miglior acque alza le vele
 omai la navicella del mio ingegno,

(To course over better waters the little bark of
 of my genius now hoists her sails)

Purgatory I, vv. 1-2,

we observe that the vele, or sails, which would have been made of cloth are thus the same text and textile made by Dante now at the end of the canticle, and with Dante himself a thread and text of the same sails and text he is making.

- - -

Dante moves ahead of all poets, and he alone faces God:

God in the Empyrean is the point that measures, according to the condition of the soul, the relative knowledge of the penitents of God. Dante's own body is also a measure of knowledge, and this with respect to the poets Virgil and Statius. As we follow the course of this relative knowledge, we will observe that when Dante/pilgrim/poet, and indeed one measuring point of knowledge, alone faces God, the absolute measuring point of knowledge, a symmetry, or balance, is struck.

Virgil's knowledge of God is limited. As a pagan, Virgil will not, like Statius and Dante or other Christian penitents coming out of Purgatory, enter Paradise and see

God. Virgil's description of himself to Statius explains that Virgil is taken from his place, which is Limbo, located in the antechamber of Hell, only in order to guide Dante, as follows:

Ond'io fui tratto fuor de l'ampia gola
d'inferno per mostrarli, e mostrerrolli
oltre, quanto 'potra menar mia scola.

(Wherefore I was brought forth from Hell's wide
jaws to guide him, and I will guide him onward as
far as my school can lead him.)

Purgatorio XXI, vv. 31-33.

The encounter of Statius, Virgil, and Dante takes place when Statius addresses Virgil and Dante, as follows:

"voi siete ombre" ("you are shades" (Purgatorio XXI, v. 20).

By addressing Dante as a shade, Statius, although increasing in proximity to God as he is going up Mount Purgatory, is thus still experiencing ignorance. (Charles Singleton notes that Statius thinks Dante is a shade because of the time of day and the location of Virgil and Dante on the mountain:

"It should be noted that Dante and Virgil are now on the western side of the mountain and that it is mid-morning [it will be said to be between 10:00 and 11:00 A.M. in the next circle [Purg. XXII, 118-119], so that they move in the

shadow of the mountain where Dante's body would not cast a shadow" [p. 503, Commentary⁵].)

Virgil, at this point more knowledgeable than Statius, corrects Statius' mistake, and explains Dante's "condition" by indicating the marks, which would be the seven "Ps," on Dante's forehead, as follows:

E 'l dottor mio: "Se tu riguardi a' segni
che questi porta e che l'angel profila,
ben vedrai che coi buon convien ch'e' regni.

(And my teacher, "If you look at the marks which this man bears and which are traced by the angel, you will clearly see that he is to reign with the good.)

Purgatorio XXI, vv. 22-24.

As the three poets continue up the mountain, thus always getting closer to God, Virgil's knowledge begins to diminish. Virgil asks Dante to express the question that is on Dante's mind, as follows:

. "Scocca
l'arco del dir, che 'nfino al ferro hai tratto."

("Discharge the bow of your speech which you have drawn to the iron.")

Purgatorio XXV, vv. 17-18.

Along the journey, until now, Virgil intuits Dante's mind and possible questions. Now, Virgil intuits only that there

is a question.

Dante asks the question, as follows:

Allor sicuramente apri' la bocca,
e cominciai: 'Come si può far magro
là dove l' uopo di nodrir non tocca?'

(Then I opened my mouth confidently and began,
"How can one grow lean there where the need of
nourishment is not felt?")

Purgatorio XXV, vv. 19-21.

Virgil does not answer the question (presumably because he does not know the answer); and he defers to Statius, as follows:

Ma perché dentro a tuo voler t'adage,
ecco qui Stazio; e io lui chiamo e prego
che sia or sanator de le tue piage."

(But, in order that you may find rest in your
desire, here is Statius, and I call on him and
pray that he be now the healer of your wounds.")

Purgatorio XXV, vv. 28-30.

Thus, going up the mountain for the pagan Virgil does not serve to increase Virgil's knowledge as it does for Statius (who earlier showed his ignorance with respect to the body of Dante). Indeed, Virgil will never see God. "Reason," which is represented by Virgil, must defer to human understanding, illumined by Christianity.⁶ And this is

Statius.

Dante asks why souls need nourishment in Purgatory. Upon deferring to Statius to answer Dante's question, Virgil refers to Dante's own body. Virgil tells Dante that Statius will heal Dante's wounds, or "piage," as follows:

Ecco qui Stazio; e io lui chiamo e prego
che sia or sanator de le tue piage."

(here is Statius, and I call on him and pray that
he be now the healer of your wounds.)

Purgatorio XXV, vv. 29-30.

"Wounds," or "piage" (v. 30), is a metaphor defining Dante's ignorance, or relative knowledge of God. "Piage" or the "wounds" on Dante's forehead, which will be healed by Statius, is a variant form of the term "piaghe." The term "piaghe" refers to the letters inscribed by the angel on Dante's forehead:

Sette P ne la fronte mi descrisse
col punton de la spada, e "Fa che lavi,
quando se' dentro, queste piaghe" disse.

(Seven P's he traced on my forehead with the point
of his sword and said, "See that you wash away
these wounds when you are within.")

Purgatorio IX, vv. 112-114.

Thus, as Statius heals Dante's wounds, or "piage," by explaining the phenomenon of the undernourished bodies, Statius demonstrates that he knows not only more than Virgil at this point, but also more than the questioning Dante.

Now, at the top of Purgatory, and the end of Purgatorio, three poets become two poets. Virgil, who represents Reason and has nothing more to offer Dante, is returned to Limbo. (Beatrice, who represents Revelation, is now Dante's guide.) Statius and Dante perform one last act in Purgatory, and together. This means that proximity to the God of Statius and Dante is equal. Both poets are immersed by Matelda into the River Eunoe, whose water revives the memory of Good, as follows:

così, poi che da essa preso fui,
la bella donna mossesi, e a Stazio
donnescamente disse: "Vien con lui."

S'io avessi, lettor, più lungo spazio
da scrivere, i' pur cantere' i parte
lo dolce ber che mai non m'avria sazio;

ma perché piene son tutte le carte
ordite a questa cantica seconda,
non mi lascia più ir lo fren de l'arte.

Io ritornai da la santissima onda
rifatto sì come piante novelle
rinovellate di novella fronda,

puro e disposto a salire a le stelle.

(so the fair lady, after I was taken by her, moved on, with womanly grace said to Statius, "Come with him.")

If, reader, I had greater space for writing, I would yet partly sing the sweet draught which never would have sated me; but since all the pages ordained for this second canticle are filled, the curb of art lets me go no further. I came forth from the most holy waves, renovated even as new trees renewed with new foliage, pure and ready to rise to the stars.)

Purgatorio XXXIII, vv. 133-145.

Only Dante rises from the water. Where is Statius?

Wouldn't both pilgrims at this point have equal knowledge of God? Dante thus is literally ahead of Statius, as Dante is also ahead of all Christian poets he has encountered during his journey, such as: Guinizelli, Oderisi, Bonagiunta, Sordello, Arnaut Daniel, and of course the pagan Virgil and the philosophers in Limbo. Dante alone will face God; he alone is the living man who writes the text. He has passed through the inscribed Gate of Hell. His forehead and body are the analogue of the Gate of Purgatory, and he, measure of knowledge of God to Virgil and Statius, faces the measure of all knowledge, the Godhead, or the Creator.

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Dante/pilgrim's forehead and the text are embraced by
St. Peter:

St. Peter dwells in Paradise. Dante's meeting
with St. Peter, however, has already begun in Purgatory by
way of St. Peter's emissaries, or angels. We recall the
angel seated on the throne in front of the Gate of
Purgatory, who is holding the keys to the gate, as follows:

Da Pier le tegno; e disse mi ch' i' erri
anzi ad aprir ch' a tenerla serrata,
pur che la gente a' piedi mi s' atterri.

(From Peter I hold them, and he told me to err
rather in opening than in keeping shut, if but the
people prostrate themselves at my feet.)

Purgatorio IX, vv. 127-129.

Now, in Paradise, Dante answers questions on Faith in order
to continue the journey and finally to be face to face with
God, as follows:

"Di, buon Cristian, fatti manifesto:
fede che è?" Ond' io levai la fronte

("Speak, good Christian, and declare yourself.
Faith, what is it?" Whereon I raised my brow)

Paradiso XXIV, vv. 52, 53.

Dante's experience of St. Peter and Purgatory is recalled as
Dante raises his "fronte," or same forehead that had been

inscribed with the seven "Ps" by one of St. Peter's own angels before Dante passed through St. Peter's Gate of Purgatory. Now, Dante hears "Dio Laudamo":

Finito questo, l'alta corte santa
risò per le spere un "Dio Laudamo"
ne la melode che là sù si canta.

(This ended, the high and holy court resounded a "Te Deum laudamus" through the spheres, in the melody which up there is sung.)

Paradiso XXIV, vv. 112-114.

The song Dante is hearing in full sound as it resounds, he says, in the spheres, Dante had indeed heard earlier, and this just as he passed through the Gate of Purgatory:

E quando fuor ne' cardini distorti
li spigoli di quella regge sacra,
che di metallo son sonanti e forti,

non ruggiò sì né si mostrò sì acra
Tarpëa, come tolto le fu il buono
Metello, per che noi rimase macra

Io mi rivolsi attento al primo tuono,
e "Te Deum laudamus" mi pareo
udire in voce mista al dolce suono.

Tale imagine a punto mi rendea
ciò ch'io udiva, qual prender si suole
quando a cantar con organi si stea;

c'or sì or no s'intendon le parole.

(When the pivots of that sacred portal, which are of metal resounding and strong, were turned with their hinges, Tarpea roared not so loud nor showed

itself so stubborn, when the good Metellus was taken from it, leaving it lean thereafter. I turned attentive to the first note, and "Te Deum laudamus" I seemed to hear in a voice mingled with the sweet music. What I heard gave me the same impression we sometimes get when people are singing with an organ, and now the words are clear and now are not.)

Purgatorio IX, vv. 133-145.

Thus, the meaning of the forehead inscribed (in Purgatory) with seven "Ps" is merged with the meaning of the questions (in Paradise) on Faith; and these two meanings are merged with the meaning of the single song, heard first by Dante in Purgatory and now in Paradise, where it is being sung.

The questions on Faith having been answered correctly by Dante, Dante is embraced by St. Peter, as follows:

così, benedicendomi cantando,
tre volte cinse me, sì com'io tacqui,
l'appostolico lume al cui comando

io avea detto; sì nel dir li piacqui!

(so, singing benedictions on me, the apostolic light at whose bidding I had spoken encircled me three times when I was silent, I so pleased him by my speech.)

Paradiso XXIV, vv. 151-154.

Although these just cited verses literally complete Canto

XXIV, the action of the same third embrace, begun here, is completed in the next canto, and with verses 10-12 of the passage that opens the canto, as follows:

Se mai continga che 'l poema sacro
al quale ha posto man e cielo e terra,
sì che m'ha fatto per molti anni macro,

vinca la crudeltà che fuor mi serra
del bello ovile ov'io dormi' agnello,
nimico ai lupi che li danno guerra;

con altra voce omai, con altro vello
ritornerò poeta, ed in sul fonte
del mio battesimo prenderò 'l cappello;

però che ne la fede, che fa conte
l'anime a Dio quivi intra' io, e poi
Pietro per lei sì mi girò la fronte.

(If ever it come to pass that the sacred poem to which heaven and earth have so set hand that it has made me lean for many years should overcome the cruelty which bars me from the fair sheepfold where I slept as a lamb, an enemy to the wolves which war on it, with changed voice now and with changed fleece a poet will I return, and at the font of my baptism will I take the crown; because there I entered into the Faith that makes souls known to God; and afterward Peter, for its sake, thus encircled my brow.)

Paradiso XXV, vv. 1-12.

Verse 10-12--

because there I entered into the Faith that makes
souls known to God; and afterward Peter, for its
sake, thus encircled my brow--

Thus, the text, not the embrace, is broken by an interim

passage. We also observe that as Dante/poet claims that he as Dante/pilgrim is silently listening to the singing of St. Peter, which is taking place during the time of the embrace, Dante, now poet, in this interim passage is thinking about his body and the text.

In sum, the St. Peter, literally embracing the body of Dante, is gesturally embracing Dante into the Faith. The same gesture metaphorically embraces the interim passage that alludes to Dante's body and the text. For these reasons, we may say that Dante's experience of Purgatory as a pilgrim and as a poet, thus the contrappasso, which for Dante is the writing of the poem, is affirmed by St. Peter.

It is also worth noting a structural parallel between the break of the third embrace, occupied by the passage dealing with Dante's body and the text, and the break that takes place in Purgatory. In Purgatory, the journey of Dante's purgation, which is the meaning of the seven "Ps," and the fulfillment of Dante's contrappasso, which is to write the poem, takes place during the act of contrition. And contrition, we have noted, etymologically means break. In addition, Dante's forehead, also noted earlier, as it is inscribed with the seven "Ps," is the lintel of his body. Thus, Dante the analogue of the Gate of

Purgatory, meets St. Peter, the proprietor of the same gate.

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Dante, told to open his mouth by St. Peter, fulfills at the same time the commandment⁷ enjoined to him by St. Peter to write the text:

St. Peter commands Dante to write what St. Peter tells him, as follows:

Non fu nostra intenzion ch'a destra mano
del sangue mio, di Lin, di quel di Cleto,
per essere ad acquisto d'oro usata;

ma per acquisto d'esto viver lieto
e Sisto e Pio e Calisto e Urbano
sparse lo sangue dopo molto fleto.

Non fu nostra intenzion ch'a destra mano
d'i nostro successor parte sedesse,
parte da l'altra del popol cristiano;

né che le chiavi che mi fuor concesse,
divenisser signaculo in vessillo
che contra battezzati combattesse;

né ch'io fossi figura di sigillo
a privilegi venduti e mendaci,
ond'io sovente arrosso e disfavillo.

In vesta di pastor lupi rapaci
si veggion di qua sù per tutti i paschi:
o difesa di Dio, perché pur giaci?

Del sangue nostro Caorsini e Guaschi
s'apparecchian di bere: o buon principio,
a che vil fine convien che tu caschi!

Ma l'alta provedenza, che non Scipio
difese a Roma la gloria del mondo,

soccorrà tosto, sì com'io concipio;

e tu, figliuol, che per lo mortal pondo
 ancor giù tornerai, apri la bocca,
 e non asconder quel ch'io non ascondo."

("The spouse of Christ was not nurtured on my blood and that of Linus and of Cletus, to be employed for gain of gold; but for gain of this happy life Sixtus and Pius and Calixtus and Urban shed their blood after much weeping. It was not our purpose that one part of the Christian people should sit on the right of our successors, and one part on the left; nor that the keys which were committed to me should become the ensign on a banner for warfare on the baptized; nor that I should be made a figure on a seal to sold and lying privileges, whereat I often blush and flash. Rapacious wolves, in shepherd's garb, are seen from here above in all the pastures: O defense of God, wherefore dost thou yet lie still? Cahorsines and Gascons make ready to drink our blood. O good beginning, to what vile ending must you fall! But the high Providence, which with Scipio defended for Rome the glory of the world, will succor speedily, as I conceive. And you, my son, who, because of your mortal weight will again return below, open your mouth, and do not hide what I hide not.")

Paradiso XXVII, vv. 40-66..

Observe the final image of the commandment: St. Peter uses the future tense to Dante/pilgrim, but Dante is revealing already what "is not hidden" by St. Peter:

e tu, figliuol, che per lo mortal pondo
 ancor giù tornerai, apri la bocca,
 e non asconder quel ch'io non ascondo

(And you, my son, who, because of your mortal weight will again return below, open your mouth,

and do not hide what I hide not.)

(Ibid. vv. 64-66).

Like the image of Dante and the text at the opening of Purgatorio, which depicts Dante and the text already singing the text as Dante says he will sing, so the image here, realized by the verbatim quotation, is that St. Peter is heard, or read, by the reader as St. Peter is speaking. The the open mouth of Dante, thus, pictured as already open, is fulfilling the commandment to write the text even as St. Peter speaks.

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Dante/pilgrim receives light and Dante/poet emits light:

Ideally, there should be no text. The mind of Dante should be "read" without the intervention of time, and indeed text--as Dante himself achieves this experience in Paradise. Given the fact that the live Dante loses his angelic powers, once he is on earth, and given the fact that the reader is not angelic, and the additional fact that Dante is commanded to return to earth to relate the message, text is necessary.

To overcome the intervention, literary figures,

such as metaphors, metonymies, synecdoches, and similes, are applied. This is ironic--the same elements that intervene are applied to give the illusion of actual experience, and thus the absence of intervention. These intervening elements, comprised of text and its analogy, Dante's own body, are, or should be, like a crystal through which a "ray shines so that there is no interval between its coming and its pervading all" (Paradiso XXIX, vv. 22-27). This image, which Dante has Beatrice say as she explains Creation (according to Aristotelian physics⁸), could be applied to Dante's own poem, and, by analogy, his body.

We observe, for example, that as Dante emits the message of St. Peter as if through his open mouth, or message through message, so the body of Dante emits light through light. Indeed, upon looking at the earth, which Dante/pilgrim sees from the Empyrean, Dante/poet remarks that his own text is a simple light, as follows:

Nel suo profondo vidi che s'interna,
legato con amore in un volume,
ciò che per l'universo si squaderna:

sustanze e accidenti e lor costume
quasi conflati insieme, per tal modo
che ciò ch'i' dico è un semplice lume.

In its depth I saw ingathered, bound by love in
one single volume, that which is dispersed in
leaves throughout the universe: substances and
accidents and their relations, as though fused

together in such a way that what I tell is a simple light.)

Paradiso XXXIII, vv. 85-60.

By saying his poem is a simple light, Dante is saying that his light is the light of another light. And when, indeed, two lights fuse, in this case God's and Dante's, there is only one light that is discernible. And who could discern the difference between God's light, or text, and Dante's light, or text?

In Canto I of Paradiso, while watching Beatrice look into the sun, or light, which is God, Dante understands that he, too, may receive the light, as follows:

quando Beatrice in sul sinistro fianco
vidi rivolta e riguardar nel sole:
agruglia sì non li s'affisse unquanco.

E sì come secondo raggio suole
uscir del primo e risalire in suso,
pur come pelegrin che tornar vuole.

così de l'atto suo, per li occhi infuso
ne l'immagine mia, il mio si fece,
e fissi li occhi al sole oltre nostr'uso.

(when I saw Beatrice turned to her left side and
looking at the sun: never did eagle so fix his
gaze thereon.

And even as a second ray is wont to issue from the
first, and mount upwards again, like a pilgrim who
would return home: thus of her action, infused
through the eyes into my imagination, mine was

made, and I fixed my eyes on the sun beyond our wont.)

Paradiso I, vv. 46-54.

The image, thus, of Dante, like Beatrice's soul and the others of Paradise, is a body composed of light. The pilgrim/Dante receives the light, and the poet/Dante emits the light. Thus, Dante would be like a piece of glass through which "a ray shines so that there is no interval between its coming and its pervading all" (Ibid.). As a poet, moreover, Dante's own body is like the created light of God, which is a text; and Dante is Light as he is the materialized text.

This is explained by Dante as a phenomenon of memory. With the Inferno, where the journey begins, an analogy is established between memory and soul, and writing and making the journey. As the pilgrim makes a journey of the soul, the poet makes a journey of his memory, as follows:

Lo giorno se n'andava, e l'aere bruno
toglieva li animai che sono in terra
da le fatiche loro; e io sol uno

m'apparecchiava a sostener la guerra
sì del cammino e sì de la pietate,

che ritrarrà la mente che non erra.

(Day was departing, and the dark air was taking the creatures on earth from their labors; and I alone was making ready to sustain the strife, both of the journey and of the pity, which unerring memory shall retrace.)

Inferno II, vv. 1-6.

By using the verb erra, or errare, which means to both wander and to make mistakes, Dante makes the experience of retracing memory analogous to the actual experience. Were Dante/poet to err or wander from memory, he would be as distanced from Truth, thus God, as Dante/pilgrim would be distanced from God. The first-person narrator is thus literally engaged in the task of recalling the self of a previous time.

Thus, light passes through Dante's body, and Dante retraces the memory of that light. As Dante's memory, like himself on the journey, gets closer to its goal, which is God, the light gets brighter. And all these amount to the same light that is the text. Indeed, to say light, memory, soul, God, Dante, text is to say the same thing. When, therefore, the light goes out, the memory stops, and the poem is over, as follows:

O luce etterna che sola in te sidi,
sola t'intendi, e da te intelletta
e intendente te ami e arridi!

Quella circolazione che sì concetta
pareva in te come lume riflesso,
da li occhi miei alquanto circunspetta,

dentro da sé, del suo colore stesso,
mi parve pinta de la nostra effige:
per che 'l mio viso in lei tutto era messo.

.

veder voleva come si convenne
l'imgo al cerchio e come vi s'indova;

ma non eran da ciò le proprie penne:
se non che la mia mente fu percossa
da un fulgore in che sua voglia venne.

(O Light Eternal, who alone abidest in Thyself,
alone knowest Thyself, and, known to Thyself and
knowing, lovest and smilest on Thyself!

That circling which, thus, begotten, appeared in
Thee as reflected light, when my eyes had dwelt on
it for a time, seemed to me depicted with our
image within itself and in its own color,
wherefore my sight was entirely set upon it.

.

I wished to see how the image conformed to the
circle and how it has its place therein;

but my own wings were not sufficient for that,
save that my mind was smitten by a flash wherein
its wish came to it.)

Paradiso XXXIII, vv. 124-132,
137-141.

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Conclusion:

The poet, following the lesson of art the pilgrim learns in Purgatory, as he observes the marble sculpture, makes the pilgrim seem life-like. Moreover, Dante applies the lesson of art so that what is represented appears to be not only flesh and blood, but also the same stuff the poem is made of--text and literary figures: a "p" represents a "p"; Dante turns his body, and thus imitates the image of a turn of verse; a word OMO looks like the same OMO in a mirror; speech is expressed through speech; and text, the analogy of light, expresses text, or light.

We should conclude, then, that Dante, as a pilgrim and poet, and as the literal carrier of text, is constituting the self in the act of writing. And the text, both for the religious fulfillment and the literary work, is the same.

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Notes

¹ Charles S. Singleton, Commentary, The Divine Comedy, Paradiso, by Dante Alighieri, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

² Dante Alighieri, The Paradise, a verse rendering by John Ciardi (Ontario and London: New American Library, 1970) Note 13. 50.

³ In his Commentary on Purgatorio XXXI, v. 16-17, Charles Singleton cites three passages wherein the image of contritio is pictured as a "breaking up" and "unrooting," as follows:

One may perhaps see more clearly, looking back, that the simile of melting snow in Purg. XXX, 85-90, also alludes to the literal sense of contritio as Thomas Aquinas represents it. A "breaking" of a cross bow here, and, in a third simile, an "uprooting" (vss. 70-72) all reflect the sense intended by Thomas Aquinas. . . . this section, from which the above quotation is taken, is commonly termed the Supplementum to the Summa theologiae. (p. 759, 760)

⁴ C. H. Grandgent, the Divine Comedy, by Dante Alighieri, edited and annotated by C. H. Grandgent (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1933).

⁵ Singleton, *Ibid.*, Notes 20-21, Canto XXI.

⁶ Grandgent, *Ibid.*, p. 510.

⁷ Dante receives commandments to write the poem also from Beatrice and Cacciaguida. Beatrice commands Dante to write, as follows:

Però, in pro del mondo che mal vive,
al carro tieni or li occhi, e quel che vedi,
ritornato di là, fa che tu scrive.

(Therefore, for profit of the world that lives ill, hold your eyes now on the chariot, and what you see, mind that you write it when you have returned yonder.)

Purgatorio XXXII, vv. 103-105.

and, as follows:

Tu nota; e sì come da me non porte,
così queste parole segna a' vivi
del viver ch'è un correre a la morte.

E aggi a mente, quando tu le scrivi,
di non celar qual hai vista la pianta
ch'è or due volte dirubata quivi.

(Do you note, and even as these words are uttered by me, so teach them to those who live the life that is a race to death; and have in mind, when you write them, not to hide what you have seen of the tree which has now twice over been despoiled here.)

(Ibid. XXXIII, vv. 52-57).

It is interesting to note the commandment of Cacciaguida, Dante's great-great-grandfather, and to compare the physiology of St. Peter's commandment to Cacciaguida's. St. Peter sees the entrance of the body, or the mouth of Dante, the place his commandment enters. Cacciaguida depicts the commandment in a course from digestion to emission, as follows:

. "Cosciienza fusca
o de la propria o de l'altrui vergogna
pur sentirà la tua parola brusca.

Ma nondimeno, rimossa ogne menzogna,
tutta tua vision fa manifesta;
e lascia pur grattar dov'è la rogna.

Ché se la voce tua sarà molesta
nel primo gusto, vital nodrimento
lascerà poi, quando sarà digesta.

Questo tuo grido farà come vento,
che le più alte cime più percuote;
e ciò non fa d'onor poco argomento."

("A conscience dark, either with its own or with another's shame, will indeed feel your speech to be harsh. But none the less, all falsehood set aside, make manifest all that you have seen; and then let them scratch where the itch is. For if at first taste your voice be grievous, yet shall it leave thereafter vital nourishment when digested. This cry of yours shall do as does the wind, which smites most upon the loftiest summits; and this shall be no little cause of honor.")

Paradiso XVII, vv. 124-135.

8 Forma e materia, congiunte e purette,
usciro ad esser che non avia fallo,
come d'arco tricordo tre saette.

E come in vetro, in ambra o in cristallo
raggio resplende sì, che dal venire
a l'esser tutto non è intervallo,

(Form and matter, conjoined and simple, came into being which had no defect, as three arrows from a three-stringed bow; and as in glass, in amber, or in crystal, a ray shines so that there is no interval between its coming and its pervading all,)

Paradiso XXIX, vv. 22-27.

CHAPTER 3

MOBY-DICK OR, THE WHALE

Like Dante, Ishmael is conscious of his task to write. Twice he expresses this. Ishmael has just told us the Pequod has sunk, and the crew and Moby-Dick have also gone down. Now, opening the "Epilogue" and in the form of an epitaph, he quotes the Old Testament, as follows: And I only am escaped alone to tell thee. Job."¹. (p. 724, "Epilogue"). Expressing again his task to write, and just following the quotation, Ishmael says, opening the "Epilogue" proper, "the drama's done."

Seen, one following the other, these two statements are puzzling. This is what we do not know: we do not know whether Ishmael is making the biblical quotation in the air, between the boat, from which he is thrown, and the water when he falls. We do not know if he is saying this from the water. We do not know whether Ishmael is quoting now as he is writing and reflecting on the difference

between himself and the crew, now dead. And, finally, we do not know whether the second statement, "the drama's done," applies to the written work or to the journey.

Saying "And I only am escaped alone to tell thee," Ishmael is also saying he will write the text. In effect, the first-person narration has anticipated itself. Indeed, the reader has already read the text. The image of making the journey could thus be seen as the image of making the same text, and the word "drama" would apply to both.

Like Dante, Ishmael presents himself as making a spiritual journey. Whereas Dante travels through all the afterworld--Hell, Purgatory, Paradise--Ishmael travels through Purgatory. Embarking on the Pequod, it is implied, is one ship journey among others made previously by Ishmael. Ishmael "quietly takes to the ship" whenever there is "a damp drizzly November" in his soul (p. 23, Chapter I, "Loomings"). Cato, in Ishmael's state of mind, Ishmael tells us, "throws himself upon his sword" (Ibid.). Comparing himself also to a rich man, who would pay for his perdition to enter heaven, Ishmael says that he, on the

contrary, is paid, as follows:

But being paid, what will compare with it? The urbane activity with which a man receives money is really marvellous, considering that we so earnestly believe money to be the root of all earthly ills, and that on no account can a monied man enter heaven. Ah! how cheerfully we consign ourselves to perdition (p. 28, Chapter I, "Loomings")

With some structural methodology, we can see that Ishmael's rescue at the end of the journey is prophesied, and this before Ishmael actually boards the Pequod. St. Peter is the figure who realizes this.

Ishmael and Queequeg are to occupy the same bed. Queequeg jumps into the bed already occupied by Ishmael. Frightened, Ishmael shouts, as follows:

"Landlord, for God's sake, Peter Coffin!" shouted I. "Landlord! Watch! Coffin! Angels! save me!" (pp. 50, 51, Chapter III, "The Spouter-Inn")

The landlord/innkeeper, named Peter Coffin, comes to the room and "saves" Ishmael. At the end of the novel, the image of St. Peter is realized in a place attributed to St. Peter--the water, or the place of Peter the Fisherman. Now, St. Peter in the form of a coffin life-buoy (thus repeating the last name of Peter Coffin) rescues Ishmael from drowning.

Since, at this point of being saved, Ishmael is literally transported into the water, or analogy of transcendence, having experienced his journey of Purgatory, would not the making of the journey and the making of the text, merged in the sentence "the drama's done," be an indication that the journey and the writing of the journey realize a contrappasso? In The Divine Comedy the contrappasso is a system for the sinner to either reenact the sin or perform a reversal of the sin. Ishmael, as noted above, claims that he does not, like Cato,² kill himself upon his sword. The sword, we might say, is turned into the pen as Ishmael fulfills his contrappasso. And it is this journey, moreover, of all other journeys of "perdition" experienced by Ishmael, that demands a writing.

Christian imagery, however, is merged with pagan imagery. Opening his narration, Ishmael tells us that he had deluded himself when he thought he had been motivated by Christian freewill to make the journey. Instead, Ishmael says, he had been moved to make the journey by the Three Fates, as follows:

Though I cannot tell why it was exactly that those stage managers, the Fates, put me down for this shabby part of a whaling voyage, when others were set down for magnificent parts in high tragedies, and short and easy parts in genteel comedies, and jolly parts in farces-- though I cannot tell why this was exactly; yet, now that I recall all the circumstances, I think I can see a little into the springs and motives which being cunningly presented to me under various disguises, induced me to set about performing the part I did, besides cajoling me into the delusion that it was a choice resulting from my own unbiased freewill and discriminating judgment. (p. 29, Chapter I, "Loomings.")

As the Fates are mentioned in the opening so, too, the Fates are mentioned at the end. The same Fates who put Ishmael on the journey rescue him:

It so chanced that after the Parsee's disappearance, I was he whom the Fates ordained to take the place of Ahab's bowsman, when that bowsman assumed the vacant post; the same who, when on the last day the three men were tossed from out the rocking boat, was dropped astern. So, floating on the margin of the ensuing scene, and in full sight of it, when the half-spent suction of the sunk ship reached me, I was then, but slowly, drawn towards the closing vortex. When I had reached it, it had subsided to a creamy pool. Round and round, then, and ever contracting towards the button-like black bubble at the axis of that slowly wheeling circle, like another Ixion I did revolve. Till, gaining that vital centre, the black bubble upward burst; and now, liberated by reason of its cunning spring, and, owing to its great buoyancy, rising with great force, the coffin life-buoy shot lengthwise from the sea, fell over, and floated by my side. Buoyed up by that coffin, for almost one whole day and night, I floated on a soft and dirge-like main. The unharmed sharks, they glided by as if with padlocks on their mouths; the savage sea-hawks sailed with sheathed beaks. On the second day, a sail drew

near, nearer, and picked me up at last. It was the
devious-cruising Rachel, that in her retracing search
after her missing children, only found another orphan.
Finis (pp. 723, 724, "Epilogue")

Thus, at the same time Ishmael's salvation is attributable both to his Christian belief and to his newly acquired pagan belief.

We observe, too, that as Ishmael fulfills the commandment to write, enjoined by the Old Testament God, Ishmael is imitating the Three Fates. Opening the narration, Ishmael establishes that the Three Fates are makers of tragedies, comedies, and farces. Ishmael, we note, is a maker of a drama. Thus, by writing the "drama" Ishmael would be realizing an activity of the Three Fates, and the same gods that motivate him to make the journey. At the same time, Ishmael also depicts himself as a weaver, as follows:

I say so strange a dreaminess did there then reign all over the ship and all over the sea, only broken by the intermitting dull sound of the sword, that it seemed as if this were the Loom of Time, and I myself were a shuttle mechanically weaving and weaving away at the Fates. (pp. 287, 288, Chapter XLVII, "The Mat-Maker")

Weaving is an imitation of God. Pip, Ishmael says, saw God with his foot on the treadle of a loom, as follows:

The sea had jeeringly kept his finite body up, but drowned the infinite of his soul. Not drowned entirely, though. Rather carried down alive to wondrous depths, where strange shapes of the unwarped primal world glided to and fro before his passive eyes; and the miser-merman, Widow, revealed his hoarded heaps; and among the joyous, heartless, ever-juvenile eternities, Pip saw the multitudinous, God-omnipresent, coral insects, that out of the firmament of waters heaved the colossal orbs. He saw God's foot upon the treadle of the loom, and spoke it; and therefore his shipmates called him mad. (p. 530, Chapter XCIII, "The Castaway")

Thus, the Old Testament God is a weaver, and so is Ishmael. The Three Fates make tragedies, comedies, and farces (and weave, spin, etc.) and Ishmael makes a drama. Merged, therefore, in the single Ishmael there are the activities of a single absolute God and the Three Fates.

Ishmael is a penitent, and thus he experiences change. He moves from experiencing his unsettled soul to experiencing harmony in the universe, as his "drizzly, damp" soul expands into ocean. We know Ishmael is changed--we observe him moving from fear to harmony. Ishmael's fear is literalized in the form of Queequeg's embrace of Ishmael (and, indeed, the cause of Ishmael's cry for rescue to Peter Coffin). Ishmael's fear of Queequeg turns to affection as Ishmael and Queequeg, in the course of the journey, read and

weave together. In the end, moreover, Queequeg's own body in its analogous form as the coffin life-buoy saves Ishmael. The same coffin life-buoy, which we also attribute to St. Peter, is inscribed with the tattoos of Queequeg, transcribed by Queequeg from his own body. Thus, all these--Queequeg, St. Peter, God, the Three Fates, Christianity, paganism--merge to save Ishmael. And what must Ishmael do? He must write the text.

Like Dante, who writes the journey of purgation, and who sees reality, or the justice of God in operation, as it is realized by the sinners and the blessed, including himself, so Ishmael sees reality. Ishmael sees the activity that is realized by God and the Three Fates, which he himself performs, and as it is performed by the seamen. It is the same activity that is normally performed at sea by seamen, such as threading a needle, twisting threads to make nets, and knotting. And Ishmael sees objects made from the same materials, such as bowlines, strings, ropes, nets, a sword-mat. Ishmael also observes that bodies intertwine like two threads shaped into a knot, or twist. A gesture

made between Ahab, whose leg was chewed off by Moby-Dick before the present journey, and Captain Boomer, whose arm was similarly chewed off by Moby-Dick, also before the present voyage, illustrates the point.

Ahab wants Captain Boomer to shake his artificial arm with Ahab's artificial leg:

"Aye, aye, heart! let us shake bones together!--an arm and a leg!--an arm that never can shrink, d'ye see; and a leg that never can run." (p. 559, Chapter C, "Leg and Arm--The Pequod, of Nantucket, Meets the Samuel Enderby, of London")

A shake of bones, like a shake of hands, is a twist, or intertwining, of one limb with another. After suggesting to Captain Boomer that he and Captain Boomer "shake," Ahab follows with a request to Captain Boomer, made in the metaphor of making yarn and making text: "Spin me the yarn . . . how was it?" (Ibid.).

Bodies that intertwine or bind, such as in the case of Ahab and Captain Boomer, are seen by Ishmael in images of text. The animate and inanimate, from Ishmael to Ahab, to Bildad, to Moby-Dick, to whales in general, to Queequeg, the sea-chest, the coffin life-buoy, the

counterpane, the Pequod, the poncho, Captain Boomer, to Pip, to sharks, and hawks, write either on the self or are written on; or they are perceived by Ishmael to be somehow related to speech and text (as in the just cited case of Ahab and Captain Boomer).

The image, thus, offered the reader is that the two characters who "bind" (or twist, or intertwine) are not only imitating God, with His foot on the treadle of a loom, and the weaving Fates, who also make text, but they are also actualizing a tautology. The created universe is realizing itself as its own creatures perform the same activity that makes those creatures perform the activity. A parallel is drawn, moreover, between the created universe and the book. A book, which is bound, contains text which depicts bodies of text binding.

Textus/textilis is the term I apply to the image of textual bodies that are engaged in text-making and textile-like making activity, and who are "binding" in units of two. I am using the Latin terms because, more precisely than English, Latin states the case. The Latin noun textus,

means tissue of a literary work, and, literally, that which is woven, web, and texture. The Latin adjective textilis, or the English "textile-like," includes images such as a twist, a bind, and intertwinement. (A twist or turn, as has been shown in The Divine Comedy, is a metaphor of making text.) Thus, the activity of each of the two binding textual bodies would be defined in terms of textus/textilis.

Because textile is etymologically related to text, making objects of fibre and making text are two mutually analogous activities. Thus, the character who is weaving or threading a needle or knotting, etc. is, by analogy, making text. Similarly, as each character makes text, by analogy, he is performing activity related to weaving.

I have organized the analysis of Moby-Dick or, the Whale in sections prescribed, I believe, by the same vision of Ishmael, as follows:

Section 1. Binding between Ahab and Moby-Dick

Section 2. Binding between Ahab and the Pequod, and
the Small Boats

Section 3. Binding between Ahab and Pip

Section 4. Binding between Ishmael and Whales

Section 5. Binding between Ishmael and Queequeg

Section 6. Binding between Bildad and Queequeg

By setting up the analysis in this way, I wish to show that the bindings, metonymically and metaphorically, realize the created universe as they realize the same bound text. This would mean, therefore, that each "bindee" in the represented real world and in the representation is constituting the self in the act of writing, or the analogous activity of textilis: there is no other activity. What distinguishes Ishmael from these characters, whose activity is similar to the other characters, is Ishmael's activity as a first-person narrator. Ishmael demonstrates that he is aware that he is realizing a religious model (and with him Ahab and Queequeg); but he is also aware that the same text he makes (or cloth, a text by analogy) is the literary text. Ishmael knows he is merging the religious model and the literary model.

Ishmael the imitator of the activity of God fulfills the Old Testament injunction to write as he also

imitates, as the writer of a drama, the Fates, who are makers of tragedies, comedies, and farces. This is demonstrated as Ishmael transcribes the text from his body as the first-person narrator to the page we read, and as he literally moves as a shuttle through the same cloth he weave.

It would follow, therefore, that the contrappasso, which is the punishment that is equal to the sin, and the purpose of Ishmael's journey, is for Ishmael what it is for Dante.

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Section 1. Binding between Ahab and Moby-Dick

Ahab and Moby-Dick are inscribed bodies. First, I will list writings and markings on each body, depicting thus textus. Following this, I will show activities related to textilis. Then, I will give examples of binding activities between Ahab and Moby-Dick.

Writings and markings on Ahab's body are, as follows:

1. Threading its way out from his grey hairs, and continuing right down one side of his tawny scorched face and neck, till it disappeared in his clothing, you saw a slender rod-like mark, lividly whitish. . . . Whether that mark was born with him, or whether it was the scar left by some desperate wound no one could certainly say. . . . whoever should do that last office for the dead, would find a birth-mark on him from crown to sole. (pp. 168, 169, Chapter XXVIII, "Ahab")
2. . . . it almost seemed that while he himself was marking out lines and courses on the wrinkled charts, some invisible pencil was also tracing lines and courses upon the deeply marked chart of his forehead. (p. 267, Chapter XLIV. "The Chart")
3. . . . and with his pencil upon his ivory leg, Ahab soon calculated what his latitude must be at that precise instant. (p. 633, Chapter CXVIII, "The Quadrant")

Writings and markings on Moby-Dick's body are those Ishmael attributes to sperm whales in general (here, I will state

what is pertinent to this section and leave what is pertinent to the section entitled, "Binding Between Ishmael and the Whale"):

In life, the visible surface of the Sperm Whale is not the least among the many marvels he presents. Almost invariably it is all over obliquely crossed and re-crossed with numberless straight marks in thick array, something like those in the finest Italian line engravings. (pp. 399, 400, Chapter LXVIII, "The Blanket")

In a previous voyage, as a result of his leg having been chewed off by Moby-Dick, Ahab's arms were bound in a strait-jacket, and his body laced to a hammock, as follows:

It is not probable that this monomania in him took its instant rise at the precise time of his bodily dismemberment. . . . and when he received the stroke that tore him, he probably but felt the agonizing bodily laceration. but nothing more. . . . That it was only then, on the homeward voyage, after the encounter, that the final monomania seized him, seems all but certain from the fact that, at intervals during the passage, he was a raving lunatic; and, though unlimbed of a leg, yet such vital strength yet lurked in his Egyptian chest, and was moreover intensified by his delirium, that his mates were forced to lace him fast, even there, as he sailed, raving in his hammock. In a straight-jacket, he swung to the mad rockings of the gales. (pp. 247, 278, Chapter XLI, "Moby-Dick")

Now, in this present voyage, Ahab in search of Moby-Dick, makes two binding gestures. He pictures himself--soul,

body, life--as bound; and he depicts the oath he makes the sailors take with him in the image of binding, as follows:

"All your oaths to hunt the White Whale are binding as mine; and heart, soul, body, lungs and life, old Ahab is bound. And that ye may know to what tune this heart beats; look ye here; thus I blow out the last fear!" And with one blast of his breath he extinguished the flame. (p. 644, Chapter CXIX, "The Candles")

When the oath is realized, it is realized as a literalization of a bind, as follows:

The harpoon was darted; the stricken whale flew forward; with igniting velocity the line ran through the groove;--ran foul. Ahab stooped to clear it; he did clear it; but the flying turn caught him round the neck, and voicelessly as Turkish mutes bowstring their victim, he was shot out of the boat, ere the crew knew he was gone. Next instant, the heavy eye-splice in the rope's final end flew out of the stark-empty tub, knocked down an oarsman, and smiting the sea, disappeared in its depths. (pp. 721, 722, Chapter CXXXV, "The Chase-Third Day")

Thus, the oath that binds Ahab to kill Moby-Dick turns out to be a prophecy, not only because Ahab does indeed kill the whale, but because Ahab and Moby-Dick literally bind to each other by way of the harpoon and the rope.

Observe the language exchanged between Ahab and the Parsee, and Ahab and himself. The Parsee makes a prophecy, or pledge, as he calls it, which is rejected by

Ahab, as follows:

(Ahab to the Parsee): ". . . I have here two pledges that I shall yet slay Moby-Dick and survive it."

(The Parsee to Ahab): "Take another pledge, old man," said the Parsee, as his eyes lighted up like fire-flies in the gloom--"Hemp only can kill thee."

(Ahab): "The gallows, ye mean.--I am immortal then, on land and on sea!" cried Ahab, with a laugh of derision;--"Immortal on land and on sea!" (p. 632, Chapter CXVII, "The Whale Watch")

Ahab denies the prophecy of the Parsee; yet some eighty pages later, Ahab makes a speech to the waves that includes a rhyme with the Parsee's earlier prophecy:

"Drive, drive in your nails, oh ye waves! to their uttermost heads drive them in! ye but strike a thing without a lid; and no coffin and no hearse can be mine:--hemp only can kill me! Ha! ha! (p. 714, Chapter CXXXV, "The Chase-Third Day")

"Hemp only can kill thee" (p. 632, Ibid.) said by the Parsee rhymes with Ahab's ". . . hemp only can kill me!" . . . " (p. 714, Ibid.) Thus, at first denying the prophecy, Ahab, now, accepts death by hemp.

What makes Ahab pursue his destiny even as his language system comprehends the consequences? Is the novel taking on the characteristics of Fate? Is the rhyme of "thee" and "me" (which is in both cases the pronoun of Ahab) the novel's deliberate comment that text, or Ahab's own

language system, is his enemy? If there is such a thing as "meaning," how is it Ahab does not know what he "means" when he speaks?

Observe, too, the ambiguous imagery of the word "tow" as it is applied by Ahab. Tow is a verb and a noun. The verb "tow," in the active voice, means to pull; in the passive voice, it means to be pulled. The infinitive "to tow" also means: to comb or card flax; to reduce to the state of tow or fibre.

In a speech Ahab makes to the sailors when his replacement artificial leg is "snapped off," Ahab uses the word "tow" twice--in one instance active, in the other passive. He refers to himself as rope, or textilis, as follows:

" . . .--Stand round me, men. Ye see an old man cut down to the stump; leaning on a shivered lance; propped up on a lonely foot. 'Tis Ahab--his body's part; but Ahab's soul's a centipede, that moves upon a hundred legs. I feel strained, half stranded, as ropes that tow dismantled frigates in a gale; and I may look so. But ere I break, ye'll hear me crack; and till ye hear that, know that Ahab's hawser tows his purpose yet. . . ."
 ." (p. 707, Chapter CXXXIV, "The Chase-Second Day")

Ahab as textilis, or tow, is re-introduced by Ahab just prior to darting the harpoon into Moby-Dick:

" . . .Towards thee I roll, thou all-destroying but unconquering whale; to the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I

spit my last breath at thee. Sink all coffins and all hearses to one common pool! and since neither can be mine, let me then tow to pieces, while still chasing thee, though tied to thee, thou damned whale! Thus, I give up the spear!" (p.721, Chapter CXXXV, "The Chase-Third Day")

Thus, there is a parallel between the image of active and passive of Ahab's textilis activity and Ahab's textus activity. Ahab is actively using at the same time tow (an image of textilis) and language (an image of textus) as he is passively affected by tow and language, or indeed textus/textilis.

Ahab identifies his textilis activity with the three Fates; and this, too, is actively and passively realized. Actively Ahab performs activity that recalls the three Fates, as he is involuntarily, thus passively, fulfilling a commandment, as follows:

A coil of new tow-line was then unwound, and some fathoms of it taken to the windlass and stretched to a great tension. Pressing his foot upon it, till the rope hummed like a harp-string, then eagerly bending over it, and seeing no strandings, Ahab exclaimed, "Good! and now for the seizings."

At one extremity the rope was unstranded, and the separate spread yarns were all braided and woven round the socket of the harpoon; the pole was then driven hard up into the socket; from the lower end the rope was traced half way along the pole's length, and firmly secured so, with intertwistings of twine. This done,

pole, iron, and rope--like the Three Fates--remained inseparable, and Ahab moodily stalked away with the weapon; the sound of his ivory leg, and the sound of the hickory pole, both hollowly ringing along every plank. (pp. 621, 622, Chapter CXIII, "The Forge");

and, as follows:

" . . . Ahab is for ever Ahab, man. This whole act's immutably decreed. 'Twas rehearsed by thee and me a billion years before this ocean rolled. Fool! I am the Fate's lieutenant; I act under orders. (p. 707, Chapter CXXXIV, "The Chase-Second Day")

The culmination of the active and passive use of the word "tow" takes place in a final act for Ahab when he comments, with irony, that he should have known that the hemp would kill him. Truth, thus, is revealed to Ahab through the same lapsed knowledge of language, as follows:

" . . . Aye, he's chasing me now; not I, him--that's bad; I might have known it, too. Fool! the lines--the harpoons he's towing. . . ." (p. 710, Chapter CXXXV, "The Chase-Third Day")

Moby-Dick, now chasing Ahab, is towing Ahab, who says, with irony: "I might have known it, too").

In sum, Ahab, in the image of textilis and textus is literally drawn to his fate by the same text that inevitably depicts his fate.

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Section 2. Binding between Ahab and the Pequod, and the
Small Boat

The Pequod is a kind of factory of textilis related activity. Since this activity is shown for each "bindee," I will not duplicate. Textilis activity performed by Ahab and examples of writings and marking on Ahab's body, already given in the above section, are not repeated here.

Ishmael sees marks on Ahab's body as the same marks he sees on the Pequod, as follows:

Soon his steady, ivory stride was heard, as to and fro he paced his old rounds, upon planks so familiar to his tread, that they were all over dented, like geological stones, with the peculiar mark of his walk. Did you fixedly gaze, too, upon that ribbed and dented brow; there also, you would see still stranger foot-prints--the foot-prints of his one unsleeping, ever-pacing thought.

But on the occasion in question, those dents looked deeper, even as his nervous step that morning left a deeper mark. And, so full of his thought was Ahab, that at every uniform turn that he made, now at the main-mast and now at the binnacle, you could almost see that thought turn in him as he turned, and pace in him as he paced, so completely possessing him, indeed, that it all but seemed the inward mould of every outer movement. (p. 216, Chapter XXXVI, "The Quarter-Deck")

Before Ahab and the Pequod "bind," and both are perceived by Ishmael as one, Ahab performs an individual binding activity. Ahab wants a broad view of the ocean and

to be the first to spot the whale. For this purpose, he first makes his own nest of basketed bowlines. (Again, Ahab, actualizing his fate, is making things in the image of the three Fates.) This gesture leads to two bindings between Ahab and the Pequod. One of these bindings is realized by means of the rope that connects Ahab to the ship's mast, as the sailors hoist the basket with Ahab in it to the top of the mast. The second binding is realized as Ahab's arm clings "round" the main mast. The following passage contains these images:

"I will have the first sight of the whale,"--he said. "Aye! Ahab must have the doubloon!" and with his own hands he rigged a nest of basketed bowlines; and sending a hand aloft, with a single sheaved block, to secure to the main-mast head, he received the two ends of the downward-reeved rope; and attaching one to his basket prepared a pin for the other end, in order to fasten it at the rail. This done, with that end yet in his hand and standing beside the pin; he looked round upon his crew, sweeping from one to the other; pausing his glance long upon Daggoo, Queequeg, Tashtego; but shunning Fedallah; and then settling his firm relying eye upon the chief mate, said,--"Take the rope, sir--I give it into thy hands, Starbuck." Then arranging his person in the basket, he gave the word for them to hoist him to his perch, Starbuck being the one who secured the rope at last; and afterwards stood near it. And thus, with one hand clinging round the royal mast, Ahab gazed abroad upon the sea, for miles and miles,--ahead, astern, this side, and that,--within the wide expanded circle commanded at so great a height. (p. 677, Chapter CXXX, "The Hat")

Now, looking at Ahab and the Pequod through Ishmael's eyes, we see Ahab and the Pequod each as a part of the other.

These images are, as follows:

1. I was struck with the singular posture he maintained. Upon each side of the Pequod's quarter deck, and pretty close to the mizen shrouds, there was an auger hole, bored about half an inch or so, into the plank. His bone leg steadied in that hole; one arm elevated, and holding by a shroud; Captain Ahab looked erect, looking straight out beyond the ship's ever-pitching prow. . . .

.

And, by and by, it came to pass, that he was almost continually in the air; but, as yet, for all that he said, or perceptibly did, on the at last sunny deck, he seemed as unnecessary there as another mast. (p. 170, Chapter XXVIII, "Ahab")

2. Suddenly he came to a halt by the bulwarks, and inserting his bone leg into the auger-hole there, and with one hand grasping a shroud, . . . (p. 216, Chapter XXXVI, "The Quarter-Deck")
3. So, with his ivory leg inserted into its accustomed hole, and with one hand firmly grasping a shroud, Ahab for hours and hours would stand gazing dead to windward, . . . (pp. 312, 313, Chapter LI, "The Spirit-Spout")

Thus, Ahab resembles a mast because he stands erectly, like a mast; and mizen shrouds run from Ahab as they run from the mast to the sides of a ship. In addition, with his ivory heel inserted into the auger-hole, Ahab, like the mast,

appears to be rising out of the deck of the Pequod (unless, of course, the Pequod appears to be rising into an Ahab); or, indeed, there is no difference between Ahab and the Pequod.

The simile of Ahab like a boat, or a boat like Ahab, particularized by the Pequod, is realized as parts of a small boat are named the same as the part of a body. Such attributes as "thigh board" and "clumsy cleat" serve to complete Ahab's partial body, as follows:

. . .when all this was observed in him, and particularly his solicitude in having an extra coat of sheathing in the bottom of the boat, as if to make it better withstand the pointed pressure of his ivory limb; and also the anxiety he evinced in exactly shaping the thigh board, or clumsy cleat, as it is sometimes called, the horizontal piece in the boat's bow for bracing the knee against in darting or stabbing at the whale; when it was observed how often he stood up in that boat with his solitary knee fixed in the semi-circular depression in the cleat, and with the carpenter's chisel gouged out a little here and straightened it a little there; all these things, I say, had awakened much interest and curiosity at the time. (pp. 306, 307, Chapter L, "Ahab's Boat and Crew. Fedallah")

The same small boat, broken, and Ahab's own broken body form a unit, as follows:

. . .so Ahab was now found grimly clinging to his boat's broken half, ...
His ivory leg had been snapped off, leaving but one

short sharp splinter. (p. 705, Chapter CXXXV, "The Chase-Third Day")

And, finally, the keel of the small boat only remaining, it replaces Ahab's missing leg:

Meantime, of the broken keel of Ahab's wrecked craft the carpenter made him another leg; . . . (p. 708, Chapter CXXXIV, "The Chase-Second Day")

Like the body of Ahab which is pictorialized by Ishmael as a boat, so too is Ahab's soul. According to Ishmael, the material counterpart of Ahab's soul is the Pequod, as follows:

. . . then the rushing Pequod, freighted with savages, and laden with fire, and burning a corpse, and plunging into that blackness of darkness, seemed the material counterpart of her monomaniac commander's soul. (p. 540, Chapter XCVI, "The Try-Works")

(And Ahab himself sees his soul as a ship, as follows:

"For the third time my soul's ship starts upon this voyage, Starbuck." [p. 712, Chapter CXXXV, "The Chase-Third Day"])

In sum, the binary image of textus/textilis has shaped Ahab and the Pequod into a single unit. Ahab and the small boat are a single unit. And the Pequod, according to Ishmael, is the material counterpart of Ahab's soul.

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Section 3. Binding between Ahab and Pip

The image of binding opens and closes a two-page chapter, whose main image, in addition, is Pip's urge to bind. The chapter opens (with a stage direction), as follows:

(Ahab moving to go on deck; Pip catches him by the hand to follow.) (p. 672, Chapter CXXIX, "The Cabin").

Ahab refuses the hand; but Pip depicts the necessity for each to hold hands in order that his own body complete Ahab's, as follows:

" . . . ye have not a whole body, sir; do ye but use poor me for your one lost leg; only tread upon me, sir; I ask no more, so I remain a part of ye." (Ibid.)

Following this, Pip depicts his own body in an image of black and white (which could suggest the textus image of black and white print), as follows:

"They tell me, sir, that Stubb did once desert poor little Pip, whose drowned bones now show white, for all the blackness of his living skin. But I will never desert ye, sir, as Stubb did him. Sir, I must go with ye." (p. 672, Chapter CXXIX, "The Cabin")

Ahab then offers Pip his hand just before he leaves Pip on the deck (thus, binding himself to and then unbinding himself from Pip). Ahab says:

" . . . And now I quit thee. Thy hand!--Met!" (p. 673, Ibid.)

The chapter closes with Pip, now unbound from Ahab, and his appeal to the oysters to join him (thus in an image of binding), as follows:

Oh, master! master! I am indeed down-hearted when you walk over me. But here I'll stay, though this stern strikes rocks; and they bulge through; oysters come to join me. (p. 673, Ibid.).

It is worth noting, too, that Pip is the single character who sees God (Ishmael presumably hears this from Pip). Lost at sea, until he is saved by the Pequod, Pip sees God with his foot on the treadle of the loom, as follows:

The sea had jeeringly kept his finite body up, but drowned the infinite of his soul. Not drowned entirely, though. Rather carried down alive to wondrous depths, where strange shapes of the unwarped primal world glided to and fro before his passive eyes; and the miser-merman, Widow, revealed his hoarded heaps; and among the joyous, heartless, ever-juvenile eternities, Pip saw the multitudinous, God-omnipresent, coral insects, that out of the firmament of waters heaved the colossal orbs. He saw God's foot upon the treadle of the loom, and spoke it; and therefore his shipmates called him mad. (pp. 530, 531, Chapter XCIII, "The Castaway")

According to Ishmael's account of Pip, God would be a weaver like the three Fates, and like the seamen whose activity is textilis related. The world, thus, seen and experienced by Ishmael, is actualizing itself in textilis

activity.

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Section 4. Binding between Ishmael and Whales

Ishmael and whales share similar characteristics: both are weavers, both are inscribed. The ontology of the whale, described in terms of grammar, text, and book, is similarly applicable to Ishmael. First, I will show textus/textilis imagery of Ishmael; following this, I will show how the same imagery is applied to the whale.

During a previous voyage, Ishmael came upon a bower in the Arsacides. In an image of textilis, Ishmael uses a ball of twine to find his way about a skeleton whale, as follows:

To and fro I paced before the skeleton--brushed the vines aside--broke through the ribs--and with a ball of Arsacidean twine, wandered, eddied long amid its many windings, shaded collonades and arbors. But soon my line was out; and following it back, I emerged from the opening where I entered. (pp. 574, 575, Chapter CII, "A Bower in the Arsacides")

Now, desiring to measure the whale, Ishmael leaves the skeleton whale to fetch a measuring-rod. With it he re-enters the skeleton whale. The measurements, he tells us, were tattooed on his body:

The skeleton dimensions I shall now proceed to set down are copied verbatim from my right arm, where I had them tattooed, as in my wild wanderings at that period,

there was no other secure way of preserving such valuable statistics. But as I was crowded for space, and wished the other parts of my body to remain a blank page for a poem I was then composing--at least, what untattooed parts might remain--I did not trouble myself with the odd inches; nor, indeed, should inches at all enter into a congenial admeasurement of the whale. (p. 576, Ibid.)

Thus, the ball of twine (textilis) leads to tattoos, or textus, on the body. We also note that Ishmael's body to him, as a book, is the externalization of his memory: the measurements must necessarily have included Ishmael's recording of them in his mind. Ishmael then would have conveyed the measurements to the tattooer to tattoo on Ishmael's body. Thus, as the mind and the body are first presented as analogues, so, too, the tattoos on the body, by means of transcription, become an analogue of the same chapter the reader reads.

Text on the whale is applied and inherent to the whale. Of the kind which is applied, there are two examples, as follows:

1. It all seems to me that such scratches in the whale are probably made by hostile contact with other whales; for I have most remarked them in the large, full-grown bulls of the species. (p. 400, Chapter LXVII, "The Blanket")

2. . . .the vertebrae were carved with Arsicidean annals, in strange hieroglyphics . . .[observed by Ishmael on the skeleton whale in the bower of the Arsicides] (p. 573, Chapter CII, "A Bower in the Arsicides")

An example of writings and markings inherent to the whale, or as Ishmael says, "engraved" to the body itself, is, as follows:

In life, the visible surface of the Sperm Whale is not the least among the many marvels he presents. Almost invariably it is all over obliquely crossed and re-crossed with numberless straight marks in thick array, something like those in the finest Italian line engravings. But these marks do not seem to be impressed upon the isinglass substance above mentioned, but seem to be seen through it, as if they were engraved upon the body itself. Nor is this all. In some instances, to the quick, observant eye, those linear marks, as in a veritable engraving, but afford the ground for far other delineations. These are hieroglyphics; that is, if you call those mysterious cyphers on the walls of pyramids hieroglyphics, then that is the proper word to use in the present condition. (pp. 399, 400, Chapter LXVIII, "The Blanket")

The physiognomy of the whale, moreover, is depicted by Ishmael, in textual metaphors. The whale's tail and jaw are scroll-like, as follows:

1. To the whale, his tail is the sole means of propulsion. Scroll-wise coiled forwards beneath the body, and then rapidly sprung backwards, it is this which gives that singular darting, leaping motion to the monster when furiously swimming. (p. 483, Chapter LXXXVI, "The Tail")

2. It was Moby-Dick's open mouth and scrolled jaw . . . (p. 691, Chapter CXXXIII, "The Chase-First Day")

3. Through and through, through every plank and each rib, it thrilled for an instant, the whale obliquely lying on his back, in the manner of a biting shark, slowly and feelingly taking its bows full within his mouth, so that the long, narrow, scrolled lower jaw curled high up into the open air, and one of the teeth caught in a row-lock. (p. 692, Ibid.)

Still another textual aspect of the whale is the whale's ontology as a system of language. The whale literally breathes, according to Ishmael, in metaphors of grammar and poetry, as follows:

. . .if you regard him very closely, and time him with your watch, you will find that when unmolested, there is an undeviating rhyme between the periods of his jets and the ordinary periods of respiration. (p. 478, Chapter LXXXV, "The Fountain")

In addition, the whale is a book. In the chapter entitled, "Cetology," Ishmael divides the "whale host" in "BOOKS (subdivisible into CHAPTERS)" (p. 184, Chapter XXXII,), as follows:

nothing but to take hold of the whales bodily, in their entire liberal volume, and boldly sort them that way. And this is the Bibliographical system here adopted; and it is the only one that can possibly succeed, for it alone is practicable. (p. 188, Ibid.)

And whales are classifiable as Folios, Octavos, and Duodecimos.

In sum, the whale is a book formed in the image of

language. And as the whale is a book, whose body is a text, and whose language is grammatically systemized, and is a metaphor of poetry, the whale is, like any first-person narrator, literally telling itself.

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As text is the ontology of the whale, so is weave. The whale weaves himself into the same weave he weaves, as follows:

1. . . . the whole bulk of the leviathan is knit over with a warp and woof of muscular fibres and filaments, which passing on either side the loins and running down into the flukes, insensibly blend with them, and largely contribute to their might; . . . (pp. 481, 482, Chapter LXXXVI, "The Tail").

2. Now, amid the green, life-restless loom of that Arsacidean wood, the great, white, worshipped skeleton lay lounging--a gigantic idler! Yet, as the ever-woven verdant warp and woof intermixed and hummed around him, the mighty idler seemed the cunning weaver; himself all woven over with the vines; every month assuming greener, fresher verdure; but himself a skeleton. Life folded Death; Death trellised Life; the grim god wived with youthful Life, and begat him curly-headed glories. (p. 574, Chapter CII, "A Bower in the Arsacides")

Ishmael, like the whale, is the weaver of himself.

Weaving a sword-mat, Ishmael says:

I say so strange a dreaminess did there then reign all over the ship and all over the sea, only broken by the intermitting dull sound of the sword, that it seemed as if this were the Loom of Time, and I myself were a

shuttle mechanically weaving and weaving away at the Fates. (pp. 287, 288, Chapter XLVII, "The Mat-Maker")

Thus, what we can say of Ishmael we say of the whale. Ishmael is the cloth he weaves; Ishmael, first-person narrator, is the text he is writing; the whale is the weave he weaves; the whale is the text he is.

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Bindings between Ishmael and the whale are made in the image of textus/textilis. In this first binding, comparing himself to a letter-sorter or carrier of messages, Ishmael mixes the metaphors of the sea, a library, a post office. Ishmael, a fisherman, a messenger, a writer, "essay(s) to hook the nose of this leviathan," as follows:

My object here is simply to project the draught of a systematization of cetology. I am the architect, not the builder.

But it is a ponderous task; no ordinary letter-sorter in the Post-office is equal to it. To grope down into the bottom of the sea after them; to have one's hands among the unspeakable foundations, ribs, and very pelvis of the world; this is a fearful thing. What am I that I should essay to hook the nose of this leviathan! The awful tauntings in Job might well appal me. "Will he (the leviathan) make a covenant with thee? Behold the hope of him is vain!" But I have swam through libraries and sailed through oceans; I have had to do with whales with these visible hands; I am in earnest; and I will try. (pp. 181, 182, Chapter XXXII, "Cetology")

Hooking the nose of the leviathan is an image of Ishmael literally binding the whale; the covenant Ishmael would hope to make with the leviathan is an image of a figurative binding.

The following binding, made between Ishmael and the whale, is realized in the metaphor of skin as binding. Since the skin in question is inscribed, the image is textus/textilis. The skin on Ishmael's body is inscribed with the measurements of the skeleton whale. The skeleton whale, of course, is without skin. Thus, we may imagine that either Ishmael is a whale, by analogy, or the skeleton whale is, by analogy, Ishmael.

Observe how Ishmael describes the whale's skin in the following passage and how Ishmael imagines that the whale sees himself through its own skin:

Now, however preposterous it may at first seem to talk of any creature's skin as being of that sort of consistence and thickness, yet in point of fact these are no arguments against such a presumption; because you cannot raise any other dense enveloping layer from the whale's body but that same blubber; and the outermost enveloping layer of any animal, if reasonably dense, what can that be but the skin? True, from the unmarred dead body of the whale, you may scrape off with your hand an infinitely thin, transparent substance, somewhat resembling the thinnest shreads of

isinglass, only it is almost as flexible and soft as satin; that is previous to being dried, when it not only contracts and thickens, but becomes rather hard and brittle. I have several such dried bits, which I use for marks in my whale-books. It is transparent, as I said before; and being laid upon the printed page, I have sometimes pleased myself with fancying it exerted a magnifying influence. At any rate, it is pleasant to read about whales through their own spectacles, as you may say. But what I am driving at here is this. That same infinitely thin, isinglass substance, which, I admit, invests the entire body of the whale, is not so much to be regarded as the skin of the creature, as the skin of the skin, so to speak; . . . (p. 399, Chapter LXVIII, "The Blanket")

Here, too, as it has been consistent in the relationship between Ishmael and whales, there is a similarity between Ishmael and the whale. The isinglass of the whale, which serves as a magnifying glass used by Ishmael to read about whales, would serve, in Ishmael's mind, as a way for whales to read about themselves. The same reading of the self is experienced by Ishmael as he transcribes from himself to the book. Ishmael, thus, like the whale is reading himself through his own spectacles.

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Section 5. Binding between Ishmael and Queequeg

Ishmael, as we have seen, is inscribed with the measurements of the skeleton whale; he is a thread of the same cloth he weaves; he is the first-person narrator, thus a character of the same text he is making. Queequeg, like Ishmael, is offered in textus/textilis imagery.

The image of textilis is applied to Queequeg in two instances. One takes place at the same time the image is applied to Ishmael. When Ishmael is weaving the sword-mat, it is Queequeg that keeps the twist of the weave even with his sword, as follows:

It was a cloudy, sultry afternoon; the seamen were lazily lounging about the decks, or vacantly gazing over into the lead-colored waters. Queequeg and I were mildly employed weaving what is called a sword-mat, for an additional lashing to our boat. So still and subdued and yet somehow preluding was all the scene, and such an incantation of revery lurked in the air, that each silent sailor seemed resolved into his own invisible self.

I was the attendant or page of Queequeg, while busy at the mat. As I kept passing a repassing the filling or woof of marline between the long yarns of the warp, using my own hand for the shuttle, and as Queequeg, standing sideways, every and anon slid his heavy oaken sword between the threads, and idly looking off upon the water, carelessly and unthinkingly drove home every yarn: . . . (p. 287, Chapter XLVII, "The Mat-Maker")

Queequeg is also perceived by Ishmael as the counterpane:

this same arm of his, I say, looked for all the world like a strip of that same patchwork quilt.

Indeed, partly lying on it as the arm did when I first awoke, I could hardly tell it from the quilt, they so blended their hues together; and it was only by the sense of weight and pressure that I could tell that Queequeg was hugging me. (p 52, Chapter IV, "The Counterpane")

Queequeg's tattooed body, or Queequeg as textus, is depicted as Ishmael watches Queequeg transcribe tattoos from his body to a sea-chest, as follows:

Many spare hours he spent, in carving the lid with all manner of grotesque figures and drawings; and it seemed that hereby he was striving, in his rude way, to copy parts of the twisted tattooing on his body. And this tattooing, had been the work of a departed prophet and seer of his island, who, by those hieroglyphic marks, had written out on his body a complete theory of the heavens and the earth, and a mystical treatise on the art of attaining truth; so that Queequeg in his own proper person was a riddle to unfold; a wondrous work in one volume; but whose mysteries not even himself could read, though his own live heart beat against them; and these mysteries were therefore destined in the end to moulder away with the living parchment whereon they were inscribed, and so be unsolved to the last. (p. 612, Chapter CX, "Queequeg in His Coffin")

Binding and unbinding activities are individually performed by Ishmael and Queequeg before bindings between both take place. The following is a paraphrase of Ishmael's description. It is Chapter III, entitled "The Spouter Inn";

Ishmael is escorted to the room he is to share with Queequeg. Ishmael goes to the bed, folds back the counterpane, stoops over the bed. After eyeing the room, he touches and takes up an article on a chest; not knowing what purpose it serves, he calls it, at first, a door mat. He puts it on, sees himself in the mirror, tears it off. He jumps out of his pantaloons and boots (blows out the light, and tumbles into bed). Queequeg enters the room, places his candle on the floor and works "away at the knotted cords of the large bag" (Ibid.) He pulls two objects out of the bag--one a sort of tomahawk, the other a seal-skin wallet. He places them on the old chest; he takes the head and "rams" it down the bag; he begins to undress; he pulls a black manikin from his overcoat, removes some shavings from his coat pocket and places them before the idol; he kindles the shavings into a sacrificial blaze; he prays; he extinguishes the flame, and puts the idol into his coat pocket. (During this description of Queequeg's activities, Ishmael is also noting the colors and shapes of the tattoos of Queequeg's body.)

The foregoing binding and unbinding activities may be classified as either figurative or literal, as follows:

Ishmael's Actions	Binding	Unbinding
1. pulls back the counterpane from the bed--an unbinding of the bed('s clothes)		literal
2. puts on door mat by slipping it over the head and the body--a binding of Ishmael (clothes serve as a second skin, and skin is the first binder of the body)	literal	
3. tears off the door mat--an unbinding (of the second skin)		literal
4. tumbles into bed (probably between the sheets and the counterpane [wouldn't Ishmael say "onto" if he tumbled on the bed?])--a binding	literal	
Queequeg's Actions	Binding	Unbinding
1. works away at knotted cords of bag "unlacing the bag's mouth (p. 47)--an unbinding		literal
2. undresses--an unbinding (of the second skin)		literal
3. prays--this religious activity is a binding. (The word "religion" is "of doubtful etymology, by Cicero, connected with <u>relegere</u> to read over again, but by later authors with <u>religare</u> , to bind." <u>{The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary,</u>	figurative	

Oxford University Press, 1971,
Oxford, England])

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Individual bindings performed by Ishmael and
Queequeg are followed by a binding between Ishmael and
Queequeg, as follows:

Upon waking next morning about daylight, I found
Queequeg's arm thrown over me in the most loving and
affectionate manner. You had almost thought I had been
his wife. The counterpane was of patchwork, full of
odd little parti-colored squares and triangles; and
this arm of his tattooed all over with an interminable
Cretan labyrinth of a figure, no two parts of which
were of one precise shade--owing I suppose to his
keeping his arm at sea unmethodically in sun and shade,
his shirt sleeves irregularly rolled up at various
times--this same arm of his, I say, looked for all the
world like a strip of that same patchwork quilt.

Indeed, partly lying on it as the arm did when I first
awoke, I could hardly tell it from the quilt, they so
blended their hues together; and it was only by the
sense of weight and pressure that I could tell that
Queequeg was hugging me. (p 52, Chapter IV, "The
Counterpane")

.

For though I tried to move his arm--unlock his
bridegroom clasp--yet, sleeping as he was, he still
hugged me tightly, as though naught but death should
part us twain. I now strove to rouse him--"Queequeg!"--
-but his only answer was a snore. . . . At length, by
 dint of much wriggling, and loud and incessant
expostulations upon the unbecomingness of his hugging a
fellow male in that matrimonial sort of style, I
succeeded in extracting a grunt; and presently, he drew
back his arm...(p. 54, Ibid.)

In this binding between Ishmael and Queequeg, we see the following:

a) Queequeg and the counterpane literally bind; also:

(1) the skin of Queequeg and the counterpane are similar in appearance;

(2) the skin of Queequeg is readable, but not interpretable;

(3) the counterpane is readable, but not interpretable.

b) The binding between Ishmael and Queequeg is due to the initiative of Queequeg.

(1) Ishmael is a kind of wife to Queequeg, who is a kind of bridegroom. This is a figurative binding, or marriage.

(2) In the paraphrase of a wedding contract, Ishmael says: "as though naught but death should part us twain" (p. 54, Ibid.) The unbinding of the wedding contract would be a figurative unbinding; but death would be a literal unbinding (as they are literally bound by their embrace).

Another image of binding between Ishmael and Queequeg is preceded by a textus/textilis activity performed by Ishmael. Prior to entering the Whaleman's Chapel, Ishmael brings attention to the fact that he is wrapped-- hence, a binding of the body by means of the second skin, or clothes:

Wrapping myself in my shaggy jacket of the cloth called bearskin, I fought my way against the stubborn storm.
(p. 63, Chapter VII, "The Chapel")

In the Whaleman's Chapel, Ishmael reads the "marble tablets, with black borders, masoned into the wall" (p. 63). He does not quote them, and says "I do not pretend to quote" (Ibid). Ishmael remarks that Queequeg, who cannot read, and who is also in the chapel, is the only one not reading "those frozen inscriptions" (p. 64). Later, when Ishmael returns to the Spouter Inn, he notes that Queequeg stops whittling away at his idol's face (a religious, thus binding, activity, or textilis), and performs a reading, thus textus, activity, as follows:

But being now interrupted, he put up the image; and pretty soon, going to the table, took up a large book there, and placing it on his lap began counting the pages with deliberate regularity; at every fiftieth

page--as I fancied--stopping a moment, looking vacantly around him, and giving utterance to a long-drawn gurgling whistle of astonishment. He would then begin again the next fifty; seeming to commence at number one each time, as though he could not count more than fifty, and it was only by such a large number of fifties being found together, that his astonishment at the multitude of pages was excited. (pp. 81, 82, Chapter X, "A Bosom Friend")

Reading for Ishmael and Queequeg amounts to the gesture of reading as act that does not produce meaning. In the chapel, Ishmael observes that the inscriptions of the marble tablets are texts without bodies:

Oh! ye whose dead lie buried beneath the green grass; who standing among flowers can say--here, here lies my beloved; ye know not the desolation that broods in bosoms like these. What bitter blanks in those black-bordered marbles which cover no ashes! What despair in those immovable inscriptions! What deadly voids and unbidden infidelities in the lines that seem to gnaw upon all Faith, and refuse resurrections to the beings who have placelessly perished without a grave. (pp. 64, 65, Chapter VII, "The Chapel")

Queequeg, who cannot read, is looking at the pages of the book in a manner that reflects Ishmael's state of mind as he looks at the marble tablets. To Ishmael, the marble tablets are unreadable, or "immovable," because there are no bodies behind the texts. (It is interesting to note that when there is no body behind the text, Ishmael cannot read the text.)

Now together, Ishmael and Queequeg turn the same

pages, but do not read. From this experience of turning a bound book, binding images and between Ishmael and Queequeg are either indicated or actually take place. Ishmael says Queequeg "made out to ask me whether we were again to be bedfellows, I told him yes" (p. 84, Chapter X, "A Bosom Friend"); both engage in a "social smoke," and an exchange of "puffs" (p. 84, Ibid.). These gestures done, Ishmael and Queequeg embrace, as follows:

. . . he pressed his forehead against mine, clasped me around the waist, and said that henceforth we were married; meaning in his country's phrase, that we were bosom friends; he would gladly die for me, if need should be. (p. 84, Chapter X, "A Bosom Friend")

Still another binding between Ishmael and Queequeg takes place. Queequeg takes out the wooden idol he had been whittling when Ishmael first found him upon returning from the Whaleman's Chapel; he invites Ishmael to join him in prayer (a figurative binding of both to a god). At first hesitating, Ishmael accepts and "converts" (a figurative binding to Queequeg's god). The word "unite," which is a figurative image of binding, is used three times in the single paragraph, as follows:

1. How then could I unite with this wild idolator in worshipping his piece of wood? . . .

2. And what do I wish that this Queequeg would do to me? Why, unite with me in my particular Presbyterian form of worship. . . .

3. Consequently, I must then unite with him in his; ergo, I must turn idolator. (p. 85, Chapter X, "A Bosom Friend")

Unity of Ishmael with Queequeg, shaped in the image of a figurative binding, which is the religious conversion of Ishmael, leads to an unbinding. This is the undressing of Ishmael and Queequeg. Undressing, or unbinding, leads to a honeymoon of the marriage (or a reaffirmation of a figurative binding):

How it is I know not; but there is no place like a bed for confidential disclosures between friends. Man and wife, they say, there open the very bottom of their souls to each other; and some old couples often lie and chat over old times till nearly morning. Thus, then, in our hearts' honeymoon, lay I and Queequeg--a cosy, loving pair. (pp. 85, 86, Chapter X, "A Bosom Friend")

The chapter entitled "Nightgown," opens with Ishmael's tattooed body intertwined in Queequeg's tattooed body:

We had lain thus in bed, chatting and napping at short intervals, and Queequeg now and then affectionately throwing his brown tattooed legs over mine, and then drawing them back; so entirely sociable and free and easy were we; . . . (p. 86, Chapter XI, "Nightgown")

Continuing to reinforce the binary image of textus/textilis,

Ishmael describes the binding of himself and Queequeg to the bed by means of the bed linens:

For the height of this sort of deliciousness is to have nothing but the blanket between you and your snugness and the cold of the outer air. Then there you lie like the one warm spark in the heart of an arctic crystal.

We had been sitting in this crouching manner for some time, when all at once I thought I would open my eyes; for when between sheets, whether by day or by night, and whether asleep or awake, I have a way of always keeping my eyes shut, in order the more to concentrate the snugness of being in bed. (p. 87, Ibid.)

These diverse bindings between Ishmael and Queequeg result in Queequeg's confidence, and he tells Ishmael about himself. Ishmael sums this up in the binary of textus/textilis:

And thus an old idolator at heart, he yet lived among these Christians, wore their clothes (textilis), and tried to talk their gibberish (textus). (p. 89, Chapter XII, "Biographical")

Queequeg's history recounted, a pact (or figurative binding) is made between him and Ishmael, with Queequeg again the initiator:

He at once resolved to accompany me to that island, ship aboard the same vessel, get into the same watch, the same boat, the same mess with me, in short to share my every hap; with both my hands in his, boldly dip into the Potluck of worlds. (p. 90, Ibid.)

This figurative binding is followed by a literal binding, or embrace:

His story being ended with his pipe's last dying puff, Queequeg embraced me, pressed his forehead against mine, and blowing out the light, we rolled over from each other this way and that, and very soon were sleeping. (p. 90, Ibid.)

And, again, some thirty-five pages later, Queequeg will press his forehead to Ishmael's, in the gesture of a literal binding, just after Queequeg finishes his own figurative gesture of binding to God:

. . . (Queequeg) limped towards me where I lay; pressed his forehead again against mine; and said his Ramadan was over. (p. 125, Ibid.)

In another bind Ishmael literally binds himself to Queequeg with a rope, as follows:

You have seen Italian organ-boys holding a dancing-ape by a long cord. Just so, from the ship's steep side, did I hold Queequeg down there in the sea, by what is technically called in the fishery a monkey-rope, attached to a strong strip of canvas belted round his waist.

It was a humourously perilous business for both of us. For, before we proceed further, it must be said that the monkey-rope was fast at both ends; fast to Queequeg's broad canvas belt, and fast to my narrow leather one. So that for better or for worse, we two, for the time, were wedded; and should poor Queequeg sink to rise no more, then both usage and honor demanded, that instead of cutting the cord, it should drag me down in his wake. So, then, an elongated Siamese ligature united us. Queequeg was my own

inseparable twin brother; nor could I any way get rid of the dangerous liabilities which the hempen bond entailed.

So strongly and metaphysically did I conceive of my situation then, that while earnestly watching his motions, I seemed distinctly to perceive that my own individuality was now merged in a joint stock company of two; that my free will had received a mortal wound; and that another's mistake or misfortune might plunge innocent me into unmerited disaster and death. (pp. 415, 416, Chapter LXXII, "The Monkey-Rope")

The foregoing bindings may be classified as follows:

1. the monkey-rope is held fast to the belts of
Queequeg and Ishmael
- a literal binding
2. the same rope is wound around the waist of
Queequeg
- a literal binding
3. "we two, for the time were wedded,"
- a figurative binding
4. "So, then, an elongated Siamese ligature united us. Queequeg was my own inseparable brother; . .
."
- a figurative and literal binding

Finally, the last image of binding between Ishmael and Queequeg is the holding of Ishmael afloat by the coffin life-buoy:

. . . and now, liberated by reason of its cunning spring, and, owing to its great buoyancy, rising with great force, the coffin life-buoy shot lengthwise, from the sea, fell over, and floated by my side. Buoyed up by that coffin, for almost one whole day and night, I floated on a soft and dirge-like main. (p. 724, "Epilogue")

The image of Queequeg as a coffin life-buoy, or holder of Ishmael, is consistent with Ishmael's definition of a harpooneer as a holder:

So with poor Queequeg, who, as harpooneer, must not only face all the rage of the living whale, but--as we have elsewhere seen--mount his dead back in a rolling sea; and finally descend into the gloom of the hold, and bitterly sweating all day in that subterraneous confinement, resolutely manhandle the clumsiest casks and see to their stowage. To be short, among whalemens, the harpooneers, are the holders, so called. (pp. 606, 607, Chapter CX, "Queequeg in his Coffin")

Indeed, as a result of being in the hold, Queequeg falls ill and is expected to die. The carpenter makes a coffin; Queequeg does not die; Queequeg transcribes tattoos from his body to coffin and turns it into a sea-chest. This same sea-chest is subsequently reconstructed by the carpenter into a life-buoy when the ship's life-buoy falls into the sea. (We note, also, the carpenter's association of the sea-chest as flesh and coat, or binding (thus textilis) [and we recall the image of Queequeg whose skin is

perceived in the Spouter Inn by Ishmael as textilis, or the counterpane], as follows:

" . . .I make a handbox for Queequeg, and he wont put his head into it. Are all my pains to go for nothing with that coffin? And now I'm ordered to make a life-buoy of it. It's like turning an old coat; going to bring the flesh on the other side now. [p. 663, Chapter CXXVI, "The Life-Buoy"])

In addition to the bindings and prophecies that lead to the final binding between Ishmael and Queequeg, there are the parallel images of Queequeg's metamorphoses and the recurring images of his death. As Queequeg drowns at sea, his body in the form of the coffin life-buoy would save Ishmael.

Ishmael sees immediately upon meeting Queequeg that Queequeg is a changing creature. It is the morning after Ishmael and Queequeg have slept in the same bed for the first time:

But Queequeg, do you see, was a creature in the transition state--neither caterpillar nor butterfly. (p. 55, Chapter IV, "The Counterpane")

Here is a list of the ways Queequeg is perceived by Ishmael:

1. Queequeg is a counterpane.
2. Queequeg is a harpooneer, which we have seen is

defined by Ishmael himself as a holder.

3. Queequeg is, by analogy, the sea-chest, which is now inscribed with transcribed parts of his tattooed skin; and the sea-chest, changed by the carpenter, becomes the life-buoy, also the body of Queequeg, by analogy.

4. Queequeg is "a wondrous work in one volume."

5. Queequeg is like a lizard; and a lizard is a rope, or textilis, in nautical language. Here, Ishmael perceives Queequeg in a simile; yet, once this is expressed, Ishmael goes on to describe Queequeg as if Queequeg were, indeed, a lizard. (Ishmael's perception of Queequeg as a lizard takes place when Queequeg is in the hold performing his duties as a harpooneer (or holder). The episode of Ishmael's view of Queequeg in the hold is coincidental with the chill that is expected to kill Queequeg, and which causes the making of the coffin:

Poor Queequeg! when the ship was about half disembowelled, you should have stooped over the hatchway, and peered down upon him there; where, stripped to his woolen drawers, the tattooed savage was crawling about amid that dampness and slime, like a green spotted lizard at the bottom of a well. (p. 607, Chapter CX, "Queequeg in His Coffin")

Queequeg, therefore, as a changing creature is being readied

for the final change.

6. Queequeg is the coffin-life-buoy, and holder; and it is this form that will save Ishmael.

The diverse metamorphoses of Queequeg, which lead Queequeg to his final purpose, depicted in death imagery, are, as follows:

1. For though I tried to move his arm--unlock his bridegroom clasp--yet, sleeping as he was, he still hugged me tightly, as though naught by death should part us twain. (p. 54, Chapter IV, "The Counterpane")
2. . . .and when our smoke was over, he pressed his forehead against mine, clasped me round the waist, and said that henceforth we were married; meaning, in his country's phrase, that we were bosom friends; he would gladly die for me, if need should be. (p. 84, Chapter X, "A Bosom Friend")
3. His story being ended with his pipe's last dying puff, Queequeg embraced me, pressed his forehead against mine, and blowing out the light, we rolled over from each other, this way and that, and very soon were sleeping. (p. 90, Chapter XII, "Biographical")
4. (It is thought by Ishmael and Mrs. Hussey that Queequeg has disappeared, or that he is dead):

(Ishmael): . . . Mistress! murder! Mrs. Hussey! apoplexy!" (p. 122, Chapter XVII, "The Ramadan")

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(Mrs. Hussey): "He's killed himself," she cried. (p. 23, Ibid.)
5. This is the binding between Ishmael and Queequeg

caused by the monkey-rope:

So strongly and metaphysically did I conceive of my situation then, that while earnestly watching his motions, I seemed distinctly to perceive that my own individuality was now merged in a joint stock company of two; that my free will had received a mortal wound; and that another's mistake or misfortune might plunge innocent me into unmerited disaster and death. (p. 416, Chapter LXXII, "The Monkey-Rope")

6. (Ishmael experiences Queequeg as a lizard (the synonym of a nautical rope):

And a well, or an ice-house, it somehow proved to him, poor pagan; where, strange to say, for all the heat of his sweatings, he caught a terrible chill which lapsed into a fever; and at last, after some days' suffering, laid him in his hammock, close to the very doors of death. . . .

.
An awe that cannot be named would steal over you as you sat by the side of the waning savage, and saw as strange things in his face, as any beheld who were bystanders when Zoroaster died. For whatever is truly wondrous and fearful in man, never yet was put into words or books. And the drawing near of Death, which alike levels all, alike impresses all with a last revelation, which only an author from the dead could adequately tell. (pp. 607, 608, Chapter CX, "Queequeg in His Coffin")

7. And all these images of death lead up to the final stage of Queequeg's diverse metamorphoses, which is Queequeg as the coffin life-buoy holding Ishmael, as follows:

. . .and now, liberated by reason of its cunning spring, and, owing to its great buoyancy, rising with great force, the coffin life-buoy shot

lengthwise from the sea, fell over, and floated by my side. Buoyed up by that coffin, for almost one whole day and night, I floated on a soft and dirge-like main. (p. 724, Ibid.)

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Section 6. Binding between Bildad and Queequeg

Bildad, unlike Queequeg, is not inscribed; his clothes, speech, manners, however, are to his body what Queequeg's tattoos are to his. A Quaker, Bildad's quality of textilis is religious. Bildad literalizes his frugality, thus religiosity (binding, thus textilis) as he picks up pieces of twine, as follows:

Bildad said no more, but buttoning up his coat, stalked on deck, where we followed him. There he stood, very quietly overlooking some sail-makers who were mending a top-sail in the waist. Now and then he stooped to pick up a patch, or save an end of the tarred twine, which otherwise might have been wasted. (pp. 131, 132, Chapter XVIII, "His Mark")

The combined imagery of Bildad's textus/textilis is, as follows:

When Bildad was a chiefmate, to have his drab-colored eye intently looking at you, made you feel completely nervous, . . . His own person was the exact embodiment of his utilitarian character. On his long, gaunt body, he carried no spare flesh, no superfluous beard, his chin having a soft, economical nap to it, like the worn nap of his broad-brimmed hat. (pp. 112, 113, Ibid.)

.

there, bolt-upright, sat old Bildad, who always sat so, and never leaned, and this to save his coat tails. His broad-brim was placed beside him; his legs were stiffly crossed; his drab vesture was buttoned up to his chin; and spectacles on nose, he seemed absorbed in reading from a ponderous volume. (pp. 113, 114, Ibid.)

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Binding between Bildad and Queequeg is pictured as an initiation (an image of religion, thus textilis). Bildad wants to "unbind" Queequeg from his idolatry, as follows,

. . . "He must show that he's converted. Son of darkness," he added, turning to Queequeg, "art thou at present in communion with any christian church?" (p. 128, Chapter XVIII, "The Mark");

and "bind" Queequeg into Christianity, as follows:

Meanwhile Captain Bildad sat earnestly and steadfastly eyeing Queequeg, and at last rising solemnly and fumbling in the huge pockets of his broad-skirted drab coat, took out a bundle of tracts, and selecting one entitled "The Latter Day Coming; or No Time to Lose," placed it in Queequeg's hands, and then grasping them and the book with both his, looked earnestly into his eyes, and said, "Son of darkness, I must do my duty by thee; I am part owner of this ship, and feel concerned for the souls of all its crew; if thou still clingest to thy Pagan ways, which I sadly fear, I beseech thee, remain not for aye a Belial bondsman. . . ." (p. 130, Chapter XVIII, "The Mark")

Thus, the literal binding, which is the grasping of the hands of Bildad and Queequeg, is intended to figuratively unbind Queequeg from his pagan ways and figuratively bind him into the Christian way.

(The literal binding between Bildad and Queequeg, realized by the clasping of hands, is followed by figurative, or contractual binding, made in the image of

textus. This binding is actually made between Queequeg and the shareholders of the journey, with Captain Peleg administering, as follows:

When all preliminaries were over and Peleg had got everything ready for signing, he turned to me and said, "I guess, Quohog there don't know how to write, does he? I say, Quohog, blast ye! dost thou sign thy name or make thy mark?"

But at this question, Queequeg, who had twice or thrice before taken part in similar ceremonies, looked no ways abashed, but taking the offered pen, copied upon the paper, in the proper place, an exact counterpart of a queer round figure which was tattooed upon his arm; so that through Captain Peleg's obstinate mistake touching his appellative, it stood something like this:--

Quohog

his + mark. [Ibid.])

The image of textus is applied to Bildad, as he uses Scripture to determine the share of the profits of the whaling voyage:

And I did not know but what the stingy old Bildad might have a mighty deal to say about shipping hands, especially as I now found him on board the Pequod, quite at home there in the cabin, and reading his Bible as if at his own fireside. Now while Peleg was vainly trying to mend a pen with his jack-knife, old Bildad, to my no small surprise, considering that he was such an interested party in these proceedings; Bildad never heeded us, but went on mumbling to himself out of his book, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth--"

"Well, Captain Bildad," interrupted Peleg, "what d'ye say, what lay shall we give this young man?"

"Thou knowest best," was the sepulchral reply, the seven hundred and seventy-seventh wouldn't be too much, would it?--'where moth and rust do corrupt, but lay--'" (pp. 115, 116, Chapter XVI, "The Ship")

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Conclusion:

Saving of the soul for Ishmael, as it is with Dante, is inherent in writing the text. And, with Dante, Ishmael fulfills the commandment to write: "And I only am escaped alone to tell thee. Job." (p. 724, "Epilogue"). We see in each work the same tautological aspect of the self constituting the self in the act of writing, both as a realization of the religious model and as a realization of the literary model. The act of purgation is realized by each first-person narrator, and the metaphor of text and weave is also applied. And Ishmael with Dante is saved.

Closing Purgatorio the poet Dante pictures himself rising out of the same water into which he has just been plunged for ablutions, and the journey of purgation is over. Similarly, Ishmael is thrown into the water, thus terminating his journey of purgation. We observe, too, that the metaphor of text and weave realized in Moby-Dick or, the Whale is applied by Dante, both as the canticle Purgatorio is opened and closed, or as Dante begins and completes the purgation experience. In closing, Dante says:

ma perché piene son tutte le carte
ordite a questa cantica seconda,
non mi lascia più ir lo fren de l'arte.

Io ritornai da la santissima onda
rifatto sì come piante novelle
rinovellate di novella fronda,

puro e disposto a salire a le stelle.

(but since all the pages ordained for this second
canticle are filled, the curb of art lets me go no
further. I came forth from the most holy waves,
renovated even as new trees renewed with new
foliage, pure and ready to rise to the stars.)

Purgatorio XXXIII, vv. 139-145.

The shape of the text, like the space of the journey, is
already formed--thus the word "ordite" (v. 148). "Ordite"
is the warp through which the yarn is passed. The
concluding image, and passage, of Purgatorio thus responds
in imagery to the opening of the same canticle. There,
Dante, as pilgrim, pictures himself the same navicella that
moves through the waters which surround Purgatory:

Per correr miglior acque alza le vele
omai la navicella del mio ingegno,

(To course over better waters the little bark of
my genius now hoists its sails,)

Purgatorio I, vv. 1-2.

"Navicella," which means small bark, also means shuttle. A

shuttle is the instrument that a weaver uses to pull the horizontal weft through the warp, or "ordite." Thus, with Ishmael, who is pictured as a shuttle moving through the same cloth he is weaving, Dante is pictured as the shuttle that passes through a warp. The cloth, thus, that is made, like the same text, is passed through by a weaver and a maker of text; or as the self constitutes the self in the act of weaving and making text, cloth and text are made at the same time.

Whereas in The Divine Comedy weaving is a metaphor applied to the making of the text, Melville literalizes the metaphor and makes the represented reality, or the world, realize the same metaphor of the text. Weaving and its analogue text, thus, in Moby-Dick or, the Whale serve as images of outside, or what is represented, and inside, or representation. (Indeed, what light and its analogue text are to The Divine Comedy, weave and text are to Moby-Dick or, the Whale. We should not, in theory, distinguish inside from outside.)

The action of Ishmael (with Dante in the

afterworld), and with him the other characters of Moby-Dick or, the Whale, is pictured as realizing a reality that is already in principle formed. Ahab acknowledges this just as he dies, and says he is the Fates' lieutenant. Indeed, the same image of weaving cloth in a loom, whose width is fixed, suggests preexistence, or more literally pre-ordainment. This would comply with the revelation experienced by Ishmael: Ishmael learns the world is preordained, and that he, as the shuttle moving through the warp, is merely living out the role meted out to him by the Fates. (In the case of Dante, free will, and not preordainment, is required of the penitent; yet, it is implied that the self who constitutes the self in the act of writing is actualizing God's law, which is preexisting--and thus, too, the loom that Dante is filling.)

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Notes

1. 1:14-19.

2. The comparison of Ishmael and Cato is worth noting. Cato is bestowed unusual grace (by Dante Alighieri) in The Divine Comedy. He guards the foot of Mount Purgatory; but, of course, as a pagan he would not have climbed the mountain.

CHAPTER 4

THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN

Writing for Huck means reality--as a represented real person, Huck achieves identity with God by writing a letter of conscience; as a literary character, and first-person narrator, Huck actualizes his identity as Huck by indeed writing the book. My approach to The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is to observe the phenomenon of the merging of the two writings, or the literary model with the religious model. I will deal first with the literary model, which is the image of Huck as the first-person narrator who must write in order to constitute his existence.

Observe the introduction of Huck to the reader:

You don't know about me, without you have read a book by the name of The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, but that ain't no matter. That book was made by Mr Mark Twain, and he told the truth, mainly. (p. 49, Chapter 1)

Huck is literally presented as a literary character from The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. There, Huck is written about by a

third-person author, Mark Twain. The narrative of The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, made in the third-person, is "spliced" so neatly with The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, made in the first-person, that the reader may not at first reflect on the nature of the first-person narrator. Having received the pen, so to speak, from Mark Twain, and now writing The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Huck, in the first-person, continues the narrative of The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, as follows:

Now the way that the book winds up, is this: Tom and me found the money that the robbers hid in the cave, and it made us rich. We got six thousand dollars apiece--all gold. It was an awful sight of money when it was piled up. Well, . . . The Widow Douglas, she took me for her son, and allowed she would sivilize me; but it was rough living in the house all the time, considering how dismal regular and decent the widow was in all her ways; and so when I couldn't stand it no longer, I lit out. I got into my old rags, and my sugar-hogshead again, and was free and satisfied. But Tom Sawyer, he found me up and said he was going to start a band of robbers, and I might join if I would go back to the widow and be respectable. So I went back.

The widow she cried over me, . . . Well, then, the old thing commenced again. (p. 49, Chapter 1)

As Huck seems to speak, Huck seems to be a real person.

This is ironically realized as Huck addresses the reader, or "you." "You" is the first word (see above) of the book.

The reader can say, "I know I exist outside the border of the book, and I am a flesh and blood person." The first-person narrator, in contrast, only exists as a text, and as he realizes himself. The ontology of the first-person narrator is the literary character Huck, who is (re)-presenting himself from The Adventures of Tom Sawyer.

Indeed, it may be unrealistic that a character take over the role of an author who has realized him as a character, and that the character now write himself into existence, but it is also only logical that a first-person narrator, whose ontology is text, exist as long as he realizes himself as text. Thus, by playing on the image of the represented real, and by way of the reader, Twain makes the first word of the book, or "you," which represents the flesh and blood reader, realize an image of a textual character materializing himself as text.

First-person narrators, however, also deal with the image of the self as a flesh and blood person, whose referent, like the reader's, is beyond the borders of a book. In the case of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn,

the real person is called Huck. Thus, Huck/real person is told about by the first-person narrator (a literary character), also called Huck. Is this Huck, therefore, that Huck?

The same plot of the represented reality of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn addresses itself to the disjuncture realized by the first-person narrator with respect to the represented self. The represented real Huck impersonates. Son of the town drunk, Huck is at first living with the Widow Douglas who "took" Huck in as her own son. Proper clothes and manners imposed on Huck by the Widow Douglas and Miss Watson force Huck to run away. Now, home again with his father, Huck enjoys a relaxed life style. Soon "Pap" threatens and beats Huck for money, which Huck and Tom had found in a cave sometime before (which indeed was already recounted by Mark Twain in The Adventures of Tom Sawyer), and which is now protected by Judge Thatcher. In order to be permanently rid of his father, Huck fakes his own killing. Once "dead," Huck is on the road. Except when Huck is not impersonating, that is when

he is with people who know him as Huck, Huck is a body either without identity or a body with an impersonated identity.

Each movement along the journey in the represented reality for the represented real Huck realizes an image of distance of the self from the true self. The movement from the true self, made by Huck on land and on river, realizes an image that is indeed just the opposite of the movement, first on foot, then flying, journey of Dante, or the sea journey of Ishmael. The purpose of Dante and Ishmael is to recollect the true self, which is also done, by analogy, by means of retracing memory (hence, the dichotomy of the first-person narrator with respect to the recounted, remembered self of the previous time, or journey). Thus, whereas the body of Dante in the afterworld, as it moves towards God, is realizing gained truth (and so, too, the body of Ishmael), Huck's body, as it impersonates, is on the contrary realizing the false.

In the episode of Huck and Mrs. Judith Loftus, Huck and Mrs. Judith Loftus engage in a process that

realizes Huck and Mrs. Judith Loftus moving (in time) from one identity that proves false to the promise of another which may be true, but which also proves false. The last step in the episode and in the process of establishing identity takes place as Huck (whose memory has failed him) and Mrs. Judith Loftus have undone Huck of his last false identity, and there is no hope expressed by either for a possible achievement of true identity. (Huck, in fact, wants only to "appear" true.) We note, instead, that as the body of Huck remains unidentified, the expected identity is fulfilled instead, and ironically, by the revealment of Mrs. Judith Loftus' name by the same Mrs. Judith Loftus to Huck.

Huck, with a false identity, approaches a door, as follows:

so I knocked at the door, and made up my mind I wouldn't forget I was a girl. (p.109, Chapter 10)

"Come in," says the woman, and I did. She says:

"Take a cheer."

I done it. She looked me all over with her little shiny eyes, and says:

"What might your name be?"

"Sarah Williams."

.

She went and got the lump of lead and fetched it back and brought along a hank of yarn, which she wanted me to help her with. I held up my two hands and she put the hank over them and went on talking about her and her husband's matter. But she broke off to say:

"Keep your eye on the rats. You better have the lead in your lap, handy."

So she dropped the lump into my lap, just at that moment, and I clapped my legs together on it and she went on talking. But only a minute. Then she took off the hank and loomed me straight in the face, but very pleasant, and says:

"Come, now--what's your real name?"

"Wh-wht, mum?"

"What's your real name? Is it Bill, or Tom, or Bob? -- or what is it?"

I reckon I shook like a leaf, and I didn't know hardly what to do. But I says:

"Please to don't poke fun at a poor girl like me, mum. If I'm in the way, here I'll --

"No, you won't. Set down and stay where you are. I ain't going to hurt you, and I ain't going to tell on you, nuther. You just tell me your secret, and trust me. I'll keep it; . . . -- that's a good boy."

.

"What's your real name, now?"

"George Peters, mum."

"Well, try to remember it, George. Don't forget and tell me it's Elexander before you go, and then get out by saying it's George-Elexander when I catch you. And don't go about women in that old calico. You do a girl tolerable poor, but you might fool men, maybe.

Bless you, child, when you set out to thread a needle, don't hold the thread still and fetch the needle up to it; hold the needle still and poke the thread at it--that's the way a woman most always does; but a man always does 'tother way . . . Now trot along to your uncle, Sarah Mary Williams George Elexander Peters, and if you get into trouble you send word to Mrs Judith Loftus, which is me, . . . (pp. 110, 114, 115, 116, Chapter 11.)

Thus, a body without a name, or social identity, leaves the now self-identified Mrs. Judith Loftus.

If one cannot find a suitable name, or identity, or one cannot remember the impersonated self, then, as Huck shows in the episode of Huck and Sally Phelps, "let others identify me," or "let the certainty of myself in the world order be imposed from without." Presenting himself at a house (we note, also, the arbitrariness of the place Huck arrives at--a step here or there is equally valid), Huck says:

I went right along, not fixing up any particular plan, but just trusting to Providence to put the right words in my mouth when the time come; for I'd noticed that Providence always did put the right words in my mouth, if I left it alone. (p. 289, Chapter 32)

Sally Phelps, who is expecting a boy (whom she has never seen), calls the body at the door the name of the person she expects, as follows:

(Sally): It's you, at last!--ain't it?

(Huck): I out with a "Yes'm," before I thought.

She grabbed me and hugged me tight; and then gripped me by both hands and shook and shook; and the tears come in her eyes, and run down over; and she couldn't seem to hug and shake enough, and kept saying, 'You don't look as much like your mother as I reckoned you would, but law sakes, I don't care for that, I'm so glad to see you! Dear, dear, it does seem like I could eat you up! Children, it's your cousin Tom!--tell him howdy.

.

(Sally): Now I can have a good look at you; and laws-a-me, I've been hungry for it a many and a many a time, all these long years, and it's come at last! We been expecting you a couple of days and more. What's kep'you?--boat get aground? (pp. 289, 290, Chapter 32)

.

(Silas) Why, who's that?

(Sally) Who do you reckon 't is?

(Silas) I hain't no idea. Who is it?

(Sally) It's Tom Sawyer!

(Huck) By jings, I most slumped through the floor. But warn't no time to swap knives; the old man grabbed me by the hand and shook, and kept shaking; and all the time, how the woman did dance around and laugh and cry; and the how they both did fire off questions about Sid, and Mary, and the rest of the tribe. But if they was joyful, it warn't nothing to what I was; for it was like being born again, I was so glad to find out who I was. (p. 293, Ibid.)

A body thus can be a Huck or a Tom, or indeed et al. As

long as all parties agree, the false self is equally as

acceptable as one of any possible false selves.

Whereas, however, a self of any possible selves is viable in real life, a self in literature, indeed, fiction, can only be one (unlike a real person who can be duplicitous). Huck, whose ontology is literary character, and whose only existence is as Huck, cannot impersonate and cannot be but Huck.

For example, even as Huck is Tom in the episode of Huck and Sally Phelps, the "I" who is first-person narrator is Huck. Huck, first-person narrator of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, with respect to "Tom," impersonated by the represented real Huck, is a kind of third-person narrator. Literally, therefore, the disjunction between these two is similar to the disjunction between a first-person narrator and the self he narrates about. Indeed, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn in the episode of Huck and Sally Phelps could be called The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. And the episode of Huck and Mrs. Judith Loftus could, at the end, be The Adventures of a Body Without Identity, or Noname. Thus, the identity of the first-person narrator, whose literary

form is fixed, is not changeable, even as the character he narrates about takes on diverse identities. Odysseus in the episode with the cyclopes in The Odyssey¹ would be a model for The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn and the represented real Huck.

In danger of being eaten by the Cyclops Polyphêmos, Odysseus finds two ways to make himself invisible (and indeed before he would be literally made invisible as a result of being eaten by Polyphêmos). Odysseus blinds Polyphêmos and he gives himself the metaphoric name "Nohbdy," which describes Odysseus as not being. Odysseus thus realizes the illusion of an identity that explains his body as being absent, even as he is not, from the site and sight of Polyphêmos and the other cyclopes, as follows:

(Polyphêmos to Odysseus):

"Give me another (bowl of wine), thank you kindly.
Tell me,
how are you called? I'll make a gift will please
you.
. . .

(Odysseus):

"Kyklops,

you ask my honorable name? Remember
 the gift you promised me, and I shall tell you.
 My name is Nohbdy; mother, father, and friends,
 everyone calls me Nohbdy.
 . . .

(Polyphêmos):

"Nohbdy's my meat, then, after I eat his friends.
 Others come first. There's a noble gift, now."

(Polyphêmos now in a drunken stupor, Odysseus burns out
 his single eye. Other cyclopes, in hearing distance,
 but elsewhere, respond to Polyphêmos cries):

"What ails you,
 Polyphêmos? Why do you cry so sore
 in the starry night. You will not let us sleep.
 Sure no man's driving off your flock? No man
 has tricked you, ruined you?
 . . .

(Polyphêmos to the other Cyclops):

"Nohbdy, Nohbdy's tricked me, Nohbdy's ruined me!"

(Odysseus, as he is retelling the story):

"So saying
 they trailed away. And I was filled with laughter
 to see how like a charm the name deceived them."
 (vv. 356-414, pp. 149-151, Book IX).

Whereas Huck, represented real person, like Odysseus,
 deceives and still retains his own body, however he
 impersonates, Huck, first-person narrator, whose ontology as
 text, cannot impersonate. He can only be Huck. The act of
 impersonation, thus, by the represented real Huck, when this

Huck is Tom, etc., serves to illustrate the dichotomy between an I, or first-person narrator, and the apparent same self the I is writing about. Failure of the I to realize its own narration when talking about the self is thus self-parodying. This is the same whether in real life or in fiction.

To the end of the novel, as the literary character, or first-person narrator materializes himself, the same ontologically textual Huck and the represented real Huck are realizing disjunction. Two denouements, each realizing a different kind of Huck, reaffirm this image. Represented real Huck is revealed first to the represented real people, as follows:

"Oh, deary me!" says Aunt Sally: "is he changed so? Why, that ain't Tom it's Sid; Tom's-Tom's--why, where is Tom? He was here a minute ago.

(Aunt Polly) "You mean where's Huck Finn--that's what you mean! . . . Come out from under that bed, Huck Finn."

So I done it. (p. 365, Chapter 42).

After represented real Huck reveals himself to the represented real world, and only a few pages later, Huck first-person narrator reveals himself directly to the

reader, as follows:

and so there ain't nothing more to write about, and I am rotten glad of it, because if I'd a knowed what a trouble it was to make a book I wouldn't a tackled it and ain't agoing to no more. But I reckon I got to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's agoing to adopt me and sivilize me and I can't stand it. I been there before.

"THE END, YOURS TRULY, HUCK FINN (p. 368, "Chapter the Last").²

By revealing himself to the reader, Huck, first-person narrator, could be saying, now as he ends the narration and as he names himself to the reader (and it is done only this once): "If you didn't know who I was when I (re)presented myself from The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, and before you read this book, now having read some three hundred and more pages, you do know who I am. I have materialized the illusion of a flesh and blood Huck Finn; but I am only a text."

The two denouements demonstrate the disjuncture between the represented Huck and the first-person narrator. Yet, the closure, or second revealment, on one level of meaning, does realize an image of unity between the textual Huck and the flesh and blood Huck, or between what is

represented and the representation (which is to say between the first-person narrator, "I," and the self narrated about, "me."). Observe, again, part of the final paragraph and the last phrase of the novel:

and so there ain't nothing more to write about, and I am rotten glad of it, because if I'd a knowed what a trouble it was to make a book I wouldn't a tackled it and ain't agoing to no more.

THE END, YOURS TRULY, HUCK FINN (p. 368, "Chapter the Last")

Huck, first-person narrator, who has just called what he has written a book, closes the same "book" in the form of a letter by writing, "THE END, YOURS TRULY, HUCK FINN."

The letter-type closure puts into motion a relationship that would not otherwise exist--the book is now a letter. As a letter, the book, in kind, is like the letter of conscience Huck writes concerning Jim. The letter of conscience, written by Huck Finn, is to The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn what Dante's contrappasso and Purgatorio are to The Divine Comedy, and what Ishmael's "contrappasso" is to Moby-Dick or, the Whale.

God, in the form of conscience, forces Huck to

confess to Miss Watson that he knows the whereabouts of the runaway slave, Jim; it is a crime in the pre-civil war United States to protect a runaway slave. And Huck is aware that the certainty of the self in the world order politically and theologically depends on his ability to behave for the general Good. By writing the letter Huck would be absolved of his sin; thus the act of writing, or the image of the self constituting the self in the act of writing, is the actualization of the religious model, as follows:

So I kneeled down. But the words wouldn't come. Why wouldn't they? It warn't no use to try and hide it from Him. Nor from me, neither. I knowed very well why they wouldn't come. It was because my heart warn't right; it was because I warn't square; it was because I was playing double. I was letting on to give up sin, but away inside of me I was holding on to the biggest one of all. I was trying to make my mouth say I would do the right thing and the clean thing, and go and write to that nigger's owner and tell where he was; but deep down in me I knowed it was a lie -- and He knowed it. You can't pray a lie - I found out.

So I was full of trouble, full as I could be; and didn't know what to do. At last I had an idea; and I says, I'll go and write the letter - and then see if I can pray. (p. 282, Chapter 31)

Like Dante's poem and soul, the letter Huck writes (thus, too, his soul) is ordered, and in three sections. As

we will see, however, in contrast to Dante's poem and soul, which move from Hell to Purgatory to Paradise (and Ishmael's soul, written as a journey of purgation), Huck's letter and soul "move" in the opposite direction. This means that writing the letter for Huck does not save Huck's soul, as writing does save the souls of Dante and Ishmael.

Starting at the top of the afterworld, Huck's journey begins in Paradise, goes on to Purgatory, and ends in Hell. In the course of showing Huck's downfall, I will use Dante's scheme of the afterworld, indeed his soul and the analogue, the text, as a guide; I will refer also to Ishmael's journey.

Huck in Paradise:

Why, it was astonishing, the way I felt as light as a feather, right straight off, and my troubles all gone. So I got a piece of paper and a pencil, all glad and excited, and set down and wrote:

Miss Watson your runaway nigger Jim is down here two mile below Pikesville and Mr Phelps has got him and he will give him up for the reward if you send. HUCK FINN (p. 282, Ibid.)

We are reminded of Dante's lightness of being when the "Ps" are removed from his forehead, and of the "penne," or wings, or feathers, which enable Dante to fly in Paradise.

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Huck in Purgatory:

I felt good and all washed clean of sin for the first time I had ever felt so in my life, and I knowed I could pray now. But I didn't do it straight off, but laid the paper down and set there thinking - thinking how good it was all this happened so, and how near I come to being lost and going to hell. And went on thinking. And got to thinking over our trip down the river; and I see Jim before me, . . . (pp. 282, 283, Ibid.)

Here, Huck's ablutions--"I felt good and all washed clean of sin"--recall Ishmael's. When Ishmael is saved by the coffin life-buoy, he floats "on a soft and dirge-like main" (p. 724, "Epilogue"). We are also reminded of Dante as he rises from the River Eunoe, after having been immersed in the water by Matelda.

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Huck in Hell:

. . . and then I happened to look around, and see that paper. It was a close place. I took it up, and held it in my hand.

I was trembling, because I'd got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself:

"All right, then, I'll go to hell" - and tore it up. (p. 283, Ibid.)

Huck, with Dante and Ishmael, is aware that the

soul is constituted in the act of writing. When, indeed, Huck looks at the letter--

. . . and then I happened to look around, and see that paper. It was a close place. I took it up, and held it in my hand (Ibid.)--

Huck experiences the letter as his materialized soul. Thus, by tearing up the letter--

"All right, then, I'll go to hell" - and tore it up. (Ibid.)--

Huck tears up his soul.

The action of tearing up the letter, and thus its analogue, the soul, and the consequence of the act, which is the willing abandonment of the soul to Hell, expresses, by inversion, a tautology--the self constitutes the self in the act of writing. Even, however, as Huck tears up his soul with the letter, the same letter-writing episode as a metonymy of the letter, former book, creates an image of unity. In addition, the act of writing the letter--or the realization of the religious model--is parallel to the act of writing the book--or the realization of the literary model.

In closing his narration, Huck, first-person

narrator, says he "ain't agoing to (write) no more" (p. 368, Chapter the Last). The first-person narrator, whose ontology is text, cannot light out for the Territory--only the (represented) real Huck can. The place for the first-person narrator is the text, and only as long as he writes. Thus, the image realized is that of a represented real Huck, who is flesh and blood, going that way, into the Territory, and that of a Huck, whose ontology is text, stopped, so to speak, at the border of the text. We may observe, too, the irony of the final phrase: "THE END, YOURS TRULY, HUCK FINN." The pun on the name FINN, which reveals Huck to the reader for this single time, literalizes the final image of Huck Finn, or his END. Thus, as Huck is saying who he is by realizing his identity in text, he is about to extinguish himself by not writing. It is ironic, moreover, that the image of disjuncture between the represented real Huck and the representation is emphasized just at the same time there is established a metonymic relationship between the two letters, or letter, former book, and letter of conscience. We find, too, in the last gesture of the novel that just

because of this metonymic relationship the disjuncture between the first-person narrator and the self he narrates is overcome, which is to say between Huck and Huck, or between "I" and "me."

With metonymy, we find the literary figure, metaphor, serves to unify "outside" and "inside," or represented real and what is being represented. This is "comical" since Huck is not Huck at the time the metaphor is realized, and also because Huck forgets who he is impersonating. The metaphor that realizes unity is the same applied by Melville and Dante, or the binary image of textus/textilis.

In the episode of Huck and Mrs. Judith Loftus, Mrs. Judith Loftus explains to Huck how she detects Huck's failed impersonation. The examples she gives relate to textilis. Huck does not catch a lump of yarn like a girl, as follows:

So she dropped the lump into my lap, just at that moment, and I clapped my legs together on it and she went on talking. But only a minute. Then she took off the hank and loomed me straight in the face, but very pleasant, and says:

"Come, now--what's your real name?" (p. 114, Chapter 11);

and Huck does not thread a needle like a girl, as follows:

You do a girl tolerable poor, but you might fool men, maybe. Bless you, child, when you set out to thread a needle, don't hold the thread still and fetch the needle up to it; hold the needle still and poke the thread at it--that's the way a woman most always does; but a man always does 'tother way . . . (p. 116, Ibid.).

In the episode of Huck and Sally Phelps, Huck is presented in an atmosphere shaped in the image of textus/textilis (or the metaphor of making text). Sally is the analogue of a third-person author, and Huck is the analogue of her "character," as follows:

1) Huck hears sounds of a spinning wheel:

I went around and clumb over the back stile by the ash-hopper, and started for the kitchen. When I got a little ways, I heard the dim hum of a spinning-wheel wailing along up and sinking along down again; and then I knowed for certain I wished I was dead--for that is the loneliest sound in the whole world.

2) Huck reaffirms his certainty that words will be put into his mouth:

I went right along, not fixing up any particular plan, but just trusting to Providence to put the right words in my mouth when the time come; for I'd noticed that Providence always did put the right words in my mouth, if I left it alone.

.

3) Huck sees the spinning-stick held by Sally Phelps, as follows:

And here comes the white woman running from the house, about forty-five or fifty year old, bareheaded, and her spinning-stick in her hand; . . . (pp. 289, 290, Chapter 32).

The image of Sally Phelps, spinner, as a third-person author, and Huck as her creation, is followed by a metaphor of creation (or the analogue of the making of art). As a mother type, Sally Phelps, who engenders life, is perceived by Huck in images of Huck's re-birth. Grabs, hugs, grips, shakes, experienced by the body in the hands of Sally and Silas Phelps, and which attest to the body's reality, make the same body feel "born again."

Continuing the metaphor, and merging text and birth, Twain has Sally Phelps, when Huck is finally revealed as Huck, want to adopt Huck as Huck:

. . .because Aunt Sally she's agoing to adopt me and sivilize me and I can't stand it. I been there before. (p. 368, Chapter The Last).

Thus, unity between Aunt Sally and Huck would be realized by means of law and text.

In sum, making text is a unifying principle. This

is realized by Huck as a represented real person, whose reality is shaped as a sinner or as a blessed soul, either as he writes the text or by inversion as he tears the letter of conscience. (The same unifying principle of Huck Finn in the world order is realized in the image of law, thus text, with respect to Huck's adoption.) And, as a parallel act, the unifying principle realized by the making of text is realized as a first-person narrator materializes himself as a literary character. The religious model realized by Huck as he writes the letter of conscience is thus merged with the literary model, which is realized by Huck as a first-person narrator. And the texts are the same.

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The image of the self constituting the self in the act of writing is not solely realized by Huck. We find this is a pattern in the novel, and realized in the episode that deals with the imprisonment of Jim by Tom, and in the episode of Peter Wilks and his two heirs, Harvey and William Wilks. Missing in the two episodes, however, is the image of a religious and literary model. In looking at these two

episodes, we may, therefore, observe what distinguishes the characterization of Huck Finn from other characters.

Jim must conform his will to Tom and fulfill the commandment enjoined by Tom to write (Jim would be to Tom what Huck is to God and Mark Twain). Even though Jim cannot write, Tom makes him go through the motions, as follows:

(Tom) Want it for Jim to keep a journal on.

(Huck) Journal your granny--Jim can't write.

(Tom) Spose he can't write--he can make marks on the shirt,

.

and when he wants to send any little common ordinary mysterious message to let the world know where he's captivated, he can write it on the bottom of a plate with a fork and throw it out of the window. The Iron Mask always done that, and it's a blame' good way, too.

(Huck) Jim ain't got no tin places. They feed him in a pan.

(Tom) That ain't anything; we can get him some.

(Huck) Can't nobody read his plates.

(Tom) That ain't got nothing to do with it, Huck Finn. All he's got to do is to write on the plate and throw it out. You don't have to be able to read it. Why, half the time you can't read anything a prisoner writes on a tin plate, or anywhere else. (pp. 313, 314, Chapter 26)

By writing, and thus conforming to Tom's commands, Jim would realize the image of a prisoner (or the analogue of his condition as slave). If Jim agrees to write, which he does, he is accepting the certainty offered him by the slave/master relationship instituted by Tom (and, indeed by pre-civil war American society). The fact that Tom actually knows Jim has been released from slavery by Miss Watson exacerbates the image.

In the episode concerning the identity of Harvey and William the image of the self constituting the self in the act of writing is satirized. A "young fellow" mistakes the Duke and the Dauphin, as follows:

"When I first see you, I says to myself, 'It's Mr. Wilks, sure, and he come mighty near getting here in time.' But the I says again, 'No, I reckon it ain't him, are you?'" (p. 222, Chapter 24).

Quick to pick up on a way to make money, the Duke and the Dauphin learn of the inheritance left by Peter Wilks to Harvey and William. Now, as Harvey and William, the Duke and the Dauphin present themselves to the lawyer. At the same time, two others present themselves as Harvey and William. One Harvey challenges the other by asking him to

depict the initials on the corpse of Peter Wilks. Thus, again, the image is that of the self constituting the self in the act of writing, as follows:

"Peraps this gentleman can tell me what was tatooed on his breast?"

(The king, as Harvey, responds by describing the tattoo):

"Mf! It's a very tough question, ain't it! Yes, sir. I k'n tell you what's tatooed on his breast. It's jest a small, thin, blue arrow--that's what it is; and if you don't look clost, you can't see it. Now what do you say--hey?"

(The episode continues):

"There--you've heard what he said! Was there any such mark on Peter Wilks's breast?"

Both of them spoke up and says:

"We didn't see no such mark."

"Good!" says the old gentleman. "Now, what you did see on his breast was a small dim P, and a B (which is an initial he dropped when he was young), and a W, with dashes between them, so: P--B--W"--and he marked them that way on a piece of paper. "Come--ain't that what you saw?"

Both of them spoke up again, and says:

"No, we didn't. We never seen any marks at all."

Well, everybody was in a state of mind, now; and they sings out:

"The whole bilin' of 'm's frauds! Le's duck 'em! le's drown 'em! le's ride 'em on a rail!' and everybody was whooping at once, and there was a rattling pow-wow. But the lawyer he jumps on the table and yells, and

says:

"Gentlemen--gentlemen! Hear me just a word--just a single word--if you PLEASE! There's one way yet--let's go and dig up the corpse and look." (pp. 268, 269, 270, Ibid.)

The irony, of course, is that the inscription each writes, which is the identifying initials of Peter Wilks, serves not to identify the body of Peter Wilks, but to identify the identifiers.

To conclude, Huck, Jim, and the two Harveys, as real people, all are realized in the image of the self constituting the self in the act of writing. In all cases the image realized is that identity comes from without. Only in the case of Huck, as the first-person narrator (and this is what distinguishes him on one level of meaning from the others) is identity fixed; and this is Huck's form as a literary character. And this, moreover, only is realized as Huck materializes himself, as first-person narrator, as text. Still, however, even as Huck is pictured as materializing himself as text in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, he does receive his initial identity in The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, again as a character, and from

without, or from his author Mark Twain.

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Notes

¹ Homer, trans. by Robert Fitzgerald, The Odyssey, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1961).

² Some editions do not include this phrase. It does appear in the facsimile edition of Mark Twain's manuscript.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The unifying principle of reality for Dante, Ishmael, and Huck is the act of writing. We find that the act of constituting the self in the act of writing is for Dante, Ishmael, and Huck a religious, thus moral, act. "Good" is realized in the act of writing as Dante, having experienced Hell and Purgatory, achieves Paradise; Ishmael achieves Purgatory; and Huck, who rejects writing, on the contrary, abandons himself to Hell.

Of the three literary works, the figure of Huck challenges the tautology that is inherent in the act of the self constituting the self in the act of writing. Huck feels entrapped by the very making of text he must make, both as a religious act and as a literary act. He tears up the letter, which he realizes is a lie, and he refuses to write a book, now letter. (We could not imagine Dante tearing up The Divine Comedy or Ishmael Moby-Dick or, the

Whale.) Rather than the freedom experienced by Dante and Ishmael, which they experience as the Good, and which is realized by each in the fulfillment of the commandment to write, Huck, with Jim in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, and Ahab in Moby-Dick or, the Whale, experiences bondage.

Thus, returning to the image of freedom, pictured as Good, realized in the act of making text, we have made a full circle, and return to the image of the Orthodox Jewish male who is constituting the self in the act of writing. Freedom from Egyptian slavery is included in the prayers of the Orthodox Jew as he lays phylacteries. In the same act of thanking God for his freedom, the Orthodox Jew accepts Mosaic Law, and he entwines himself in God's text, which includes with it the same text that enjoins him to entwine himself. My identity and freedom, therefore, are realized just in the acceptance of the Law. Dante and Ishmael, whose will is conformed with God, experience freedom in tautology. Indeed, Dante says, quoting Piccarda in Paradise:

E 'n la sua voluntade è la nostra pace:

(And in his will is our peace.)

Paradiso III, v. 85.

We come now to still one more literary work which depicts the same images we have been dealing with: commandment, will, and the image of the self constituting the self in the act of writing. It is Kafka's "In the Penal Colony"¹ ("In der Strafkolonie").² I am turning to this work, as I have to the ritual of the Orthodox Jew, because, by looking at it, we may draw some conclusions concerning the image of a first-person narrator.

The story takes place on an island--a penal colony. Thus, it is a place, by analogy, like Dante's afterworld and Ishmael's Purgatory. A character, called the explorer, is visiting the island at the invitation of the current Commandant in order to observe a method of justice executed by the officer. The officer runs the writing machine that executes justice. The method of justice is a legacy of the former Commandant, now dead. When a prisoner has not fulfilled a commandment, the same unfulfilled commandment is inscribed by the machine on the "penitent's" body. The procedure of execution goes like this: the naked

prisoner is placed in the writing machine, which is run by an electric battery, and which consists of three parts: the Bed, the Harrow, and the Designer. The body is placed face down in the machine. The mouth is gagged; straps around the feet, hands and neck bind the prisoner to the Bed. Once the body is placed into the machine, the machine moves:

Wenn der Mann auf dem Bett liegt und dieses ins Zittern gebracht ist, wird die Egge auf den Körper gesenkt. Sie stellt sich von selbst so ein, daß sie nur knapp mit den Spitzen den Körper berührt; ist diese Einstellung vollzogen, strafft sich sofort dieses Stahlseil zu einer Stange. Und nun beginnt das Spiel. Ein Nichteingeweihter merkt äußerlich keinen Unterschied in den Strafen. Die Egge scheint gleichförmig zu arbeiten. Ziernd sticht sie ihre Spitzen in den Körper ein, der überdies vom Bert zittert. Um es nun jedem zu ermöglichen, die Ausführung des Urteils zu überprüfen, wurde die Egge aus Glas gemacht. . . . Und nun kann jeder durch das Glas sehen, wie sich die Inschrift im Körper vollzieht. (p. 105)

(When the man lies down on the Bed and it begins to vibrate, the Harrow is lowered onto his body. It regulates itself automatically so that the needles barely touch his skin, once contact is made the steel ribbon stiffens immediately into a rigid band. And then the performance begins. An ignorant onlooker would see no difference between one punishment and another. The Harrow appears to do its work with uniform regularity. As it quivers, its points pierce the skin of the body which is itself quivering from the vibration of the Bed. So that the actual progress of the sentence can be watched, the Harrow is made of glass. . . . And now anyone can look through the glass and watch the inscription taking form on the body [p. 200]).

Two executions, both not completed, are observed by the explorer. The first execution is stopped almost before it starts by the officer himself. Comments made by the explorer make the officer aware of the injustice of this form of punishment. Consequently, the officer says, "Dann ist es also Zeit" (p. 119), ("Then, the time has come" [p. 217]). The officer stops the execution and releases the prisoner. He then removes a paper from his wallet upon which there is written "Sei gerecht!" (p. 120), ("BE JUST!" [p.219]). He officer places the paper in the Designer); he removes his clothes; and naked he enters into the machine. A soldier and the formerly condemned man strap him in. The machine begins to inscribe the unfulfilled commandment, or "BE JUST!," on the officer's body. Thus, the officer, conforming his will to the late Commandant's system of justice, is fulfilling the justice meted out to him, indeed by himself. By analogy, the officer, a kind of first-person narrator, writes by way of the machine. The self is thus constituting the "legal" self in the act of writing.

At first the machine runs smoothly; then it breaks

down:

Die Egge schrieb nicht, sie stach nur, ...

 Und nun versagte noch das Letzte, der Körper löste sich
 von den Nadel nicht, strömte sein Blut aus, hing aber
 über der Grube, ohne zu fallen.

 Hierbei sah er fast gegen Willen das Gesicht der
 Leiche. Es war, wie es im Leben gewesen war; kein
 Zeichen der versprochenen Erlösung war zu entdecken;
 was alle anderen in der Maschine gefunden hatten, der
 Offizier fand es nicht; (pp. 124, 125)

(The Harrow was not writing, it was only jabbing, . . .

 And now the last action failed to fulfill itself, the
 body did not drop off the long needles, streaming with
 blood it went on hanging over the pit without falling
 into it.
 And here, almost against his will, he had to look at
 the face of the corpse. It was as it had been in life;
 no sign was visible of the promised redemption; what
 the others had found in the machine the officer had not
 found, . . . [pp. 224, 225])

The officer cannot continue to fulfill the commandment
 because he is dead. And the same writing machine cannot be
 fixed, because only the officer knows how to fix the only
 extant machine. Indeed, with the death of the officer, and
 the death, so to speak of the machine, there is now the end
 of the old system of law.

Picturing the machine as an analogue of Dante's
 pens, for example, what could Dante do without a pen? How

could Dante have realized the contrappasso? We observe in The Divine Comedy and in Moby-Dick or, the Whale that even as an angel inscribes Dante's body, and even as a tattooer inscribes Ishmael's body, Dante and Ishmael transcribe from their bodies to the page we are reading: the self constitutes the self in the act of writing. A first-person narrator needs a pen! Or a writing machine. Dante and Ishmael, unlike the officer, do sustain the act of writing until redemption is completed (or, as in the case of Huck until it is completed and the letter is torn). The officer, dead, cannot fix the writing machine and experience the text being written on him at the same time, and thus redemption.

Conclusions with respect to the image of the self constituting the self in the act of writing both as a religious act and as a literary act may be drawn. We observe, for example, that Kafka's story is not a first-person narration (although, as the machine writer with himself in the machine, the officer is a first-person narrator, by analogy). We note, too, that Dante, Ishmael, and Huck turn the act of writing as a religious act into a

literary act in the state of being alive. Indeed, the image of death and life is a factor in each of the three literary works. Dante is not dead, although he visits the afterworld; Ishmael does not, like Cato, "throw himself upon his sword" (p. 23); and Huck only fakes his death. It is just because each is pictured as alive (notwithstanding the ontology of Huck as a literary character) that Dante, Ishmael, and Huck can turn the religious text each writes to fulfill the religious commandment into a literary text. The officer who dies cannot do this.

Realizing the self, by way of making text, even spiritually, is an act of the living. This returns us to the image and source that began this analysis, and which I have followed to understand the three texts. By laying phylacteries, the Orthodox Jew accepts the notion that the Torah, or the first five books of the Old Testament, predates the creation of the world. Text shapes matter, and matter, indeed life, shapes text. Dante, Ishmael, and Huck experience this image of tautology. And what The Divine Comedy, Moby-Dick or, the Whale, and The Adventures of

Huckleberry Finn uniquely achieve, by way of the literary figures metonymy and metaphor, is to turn the tautology so that we cannot know whether the work is imitating reality or whether reality is imitating the work; or, indeed if the body is a text or the text is a body.

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Notes

¹ Franz Kafka, "In the Penal Colony," The Metamorphosis, The Penal Colony, and Other Stories, trans. by Willa and Edwin Muir (New York: Schocken Books, 1988) 191-227.

² Franz Kafka, "In der Strafkolonie," Das Urteil und Andere Erzählungen, (New York: Schocken Books Inc., 1946) 98-126.

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